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The Epistemology of Intuition and Seemings

Paul Silva Jr., Ph.D.

University of Connecticut, 2013

Abstract

Rationalism is the view that intuitions are a defeasible source of non-inferential justification. The first part of this dissertation is an exposition and defense of this view. I begin with an account of what it is for a proposition to seem true, arguing that seemings are a *sui generis*, irreducible propositional attitude that is importantly related to, yet distinct from, perceptual, memorial, and introspective experiences. I then defend the view that intuitions are seemings of a certain sort. I argue that seemings generally, and thus intuitions in particular, are a defeasible source of non-inferential justification, and I defend the epistemic value of seemings and intuitions against various objections. The second part of my dissertation assesses a familiar argument in defense of the epistemic value of intuitions. Roughly, the argument goes like this: “to have an argument which gives us a reason to reject the epistemic value of intuitions, one must rely on intuitions as though they had epistemic value. Thus, such arguments are self-defeating and are therefore unable to give us a reason to reject the epistemic value of intuitions.” Against this, I argue that some self-defeating arguments can give us a reason to not believe in the epistemic value of intuitions. I conclude my dissertation by addressing certain puzzles raised by the phenomenon of self-defeating arguments.

The Epistemology of Intuition and Seemings

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B.A., Portland State University, 2004

M.A., University of Connecticut, 2009

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APPROVAL PAGE

Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation

The Epistemology of Intuition and Seemings

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1 Introduction

In philosophy the appeal to intuitions as evidence is familiar, pervasive, and historically well-entrenched.¹ This epistemic use of intuitions raises many questions about the nature and epistemology of intuitions. I aim to answer *some* of those questions. The principal questions I have set myself to address are the following:

(Q1) What are intuitions?

(Q2) What explains the justificatory power of intuitions?

(Q3) Can epistemically self-defeating arguments threaten the use of intuitions as evidence?

(Q4) What are epistemically self-defeating arguments and why can't they justify their conclusions?

These are, of course, not the only salient questions one can ask of intuitions, but they are some of them.

My dissertation takes up questions (Q1)-(Q4) in the order they were posed. In chapter 2 I offer a reductive account of the nature of intuitions, arguing that intuitions are seemings which do not occur in virtue of other sorts

¹By claiming that intuitions are appealed to as evidence I just mean to say that they are taken to be reasons that can justify believing their contents. See Pust (2000, chapter 1) for an extended defense. For others who think philosophical activity largely involves appeals to intuitions as evidence see Sosa (2007, chapter 3), Bealer (1998), Goldman and Pust (1998), BonJour (1998), Chalmers (1996, 110), Dennett (1984, 12), Kripke (1980, 42), and see the various essays contained in the Knobe and Nichols (2008) volume on experimental philosophy.

of conscious experience to be specified. After introducing the phenomenon of intuitions in philosophy in section 2.1, I introduce the phenomenon of seemings generally in section 2.2. There I argue that seemings are a *sui generis* representational propositional attitude that has a certain sort of phenomenology. In section 2.3 these characteristics of seemings are used to motivate the reductive thesis that intuitions are the specified sort of seemings for intuitions are also a representational propositional attitude with that same phenomenology. Absent any further reason to think intuitions and seemings distinct, simplicity mandates that intuitions be reduced to seemings. The remainder of section 2.3 is dedicated to defending the adequacy of the thesis that intuitions are the specified sort of seemings against plausible counterexamples.

Chapters 3-5 address the epistemology of seemings, and, by extension, the epistemology of intuition. Chapter 3 explains different options one might take toward the epistemic efficacy of seemings. I endorse the following view:

Liberalism. Provided one lacks defeaters for p , if it seems to one that p , then one thereby has justification to believe p .

If correct, and if, as I argue in section 2.3, intuitions are seemings, then Liberalism implies the following view with regard to the epistemology of intuitions:

Rationalism. Provided one lacks defeaters for p , if one intuits that p , then one thereby has justification to believe p .

Chapter 3 concludes by highlighting Liberalism's (and thus Rationalism's) theoretical modesty. For these are epistemological positions which have far fewer controversial commitments than have often been attributed to them.

Chapter 4 takes up the defense of Liberalism. In section 4.1 I begin by summarizing Huemer's argument on behalf of "Phenomenal Conservatism," a view which is very closely related to Liberalism. In section 4.2 I assess Huemer's argument and conclude that it is inadequate as it stands. In section 4.3 I go on to rehabilitate an abductive version of Huemer's argument, one that is not susceptible to the criticisms on which Huemer's original argument foundered. Section 4.4 indicates the way in which my defense of Liberalism supports Rationalism, thus explaining how it is that intuitions are source of justification. I conclude chapter 4 with some remarks on the relationship between Rationalism and experimental philosophy, arguing that even if we have evidence of the unreliability of intuitions, that in itself is consistent with Rationalism. I go on to show what other assumptions and arguments must be made if evidence of unreliability is to threaten Rationalism.

Chapter 5 addresses objections to Liberalism. There are certain objections Liberalism faces due to its putative relationship to "basic knowledge" or "basic justification", i.e., knowledge/ justification one has by some source *s independently* of having knowledge/ justification to think that *s* is reliable. Section 5.1 clarifies the nature of the relationship between Liberalism and basic knowledge/ justification, arguing that one can endorse Liberalism *without* endorsing the existence of basic knowledge/ justification. Section 5.2 shows

that those who endorse Liberalism and the existence of basic knowledge/justification need not endorse the legitimacy of bootstrapping arguments, thus dodging one familiar objection to views like Liberalism.² Section 5.3 dislodges a relatively new objection to views like Liberalism: such views are said to be incoherent because they entail their own denial. Section 5.4 responds to the charge that arguments for Liberalism cannot provide one with justification to believe Liberalism because they are epistemically circular, depending in some way on the ability of seemings to provide one with justification. Section 5.5 addresses the problem of cognitive penetrability as it pertains to the epistemology of seemings. Roughly, the worry is that some seemings may have causes which, intuitively, compromise their ability to bring about justification.

Frequently, arguments against the epistemic efficacy of intuition turn out to be epistemically self-defeating in the sense that belief in that argument's conclusion defeats one's justification to believe at least one of that argument's premises. Chapter 6 explores what threat epistemically self-defeating arguments against intuition might pose to the practice of treating intuitions as evidence, where an argument counts as epistemically self-defeating if believing its conclusion would defeat one's justification to believe at least one of its premises. My principal concern in this chapter is how we ought to evaluate

²Bootstrapping arguments, also known as track-record arguments, are arguments which employ a putative source of justification to justify premises in an argument whose conclusion is that that very source of justification is reliable. For an example see section 5.2.

the following argument:

THE UNRELIABILITY ARGUMENT

Something is a source of evidence that justifies beliefs only if it is reliable.

Intuition is unreliable.

Therefore,

Intuition is not a source of evidence that justifies beliefs.

My conclusion is that the epistemically self-defeating nature of this argument makes it such that (a) one can use it to compromise one's justification to think intuitions *are* a source of justification, but (b) it cannot be used to justify one in believing that intuitions *are not* a source of justification. At most, then, this argument can be used to put one in a skeptical position with respect to the epistemic value of intuition.³

As one may notice, (Q4) seems to bear only a distal relation to (Q1) and (Q2) which concern the nature and epistemology of a putatively fundamental source of non-inferential justification. But only brief familiarity with the literature demonstrates that issues of inferential justification follow closely on the heels of questions about non-inferential justification. For in attempting to *justify that* some putative source of non-inferential justification is a source of justification one inevitably engages arguments that have bearing

³This chapter forthcoming in *Philosophical Studies* under the title "Epistemically Self-Defeating Arguments and Skepticism About Intuition."

on these issues. When the premises of such arguments ultimately depend on some fundamental source of non-inferential justification (e.g., sense perception, memory, introspection, intuition) interesting questions arise concerning the role a source of justification can play in one's attempt to justify that source's ability to bring about justification. In the case of intuition questions concerning inferential justification take on a new twist with the phenomena of epistemically self-defeating arguments. For there are not only the usual questions concerning what role intuition can play in its own justification, but what we should think of arguments *against* intuition which in some way rely on intuition. Hence (Q4), which asks general about the phenomenon of epistemically self-defeating arguments whereas (Q3) is a specific instance of this general question.

Chapter 7 turns to general questions about the relationship between epistemically self-defeating arguments and transmission failure. I begin by considering a variety of arguments that are aptly labeled 'epistemically self-defeating'. What is interesting, and troubling, about epistemically self-defeating arguments is that we cannot always chalk up their inability to justify their conclusions to the presence of any actual defeater. This in turn threatens our ability to articulate plausible, counterexample-free transmission and closure principles for justification. I provide an informative general characterization of what epistemically self-defeating arguments are in terms of why it is that epistemically self-defeating arguments cannot justify their conclusions.

2 Intuitions as Seemings

Intuitions lie at the heart of much philosophical activity and the aim of this chapter is to give an account of their nature. Roughly, I will be arguing that what it is for one to intuit that p is for p to seem true, where p 's seeming true does not obtain in virtue of any perceptual, memorial, or introspective experience, or any inference involving such experiences. Section 2.1 introduces the phenomena of intuitions. Section 2.2 argues that seemings are a *sui generis* propositional attitude. Section 2.3 argues that intuitions are seemings which do not obtain in virtue of any of the aforementioned experiences.

2.1 The Phenomena of Intuitions

The appeal to intuitions as evidence is a familiar phenomenon in philosophical literature. Frequently, philosophers begin with some target claim for evaluation, and then present one with a hypothetical scenario that is intended to elicit an intuition which has some bearing on the claim under evaluation. Here's an example. Suppose one was considering the following thesis:

(T) A belief forming method M can yield knowledge even if one is in a position to know that M is unreliable.

Consider now the following scenario:

The Coinflip Case. Dave likes to play a game with flipping a coin. He sometimes gets a "special feeling" that the next flip will

come out heads. When he gets this “special feeling”, he is right about half the time, and wrong about half the time. Just before the next flip, Dave gets that “special feeling” the feeling leads him to believe that the coin will land heads. He flips the coin, and it does land heads.⁴

Now consider the question: Does Dave know that the coin would land heads via the “special feeling” method? Upon considering this case many have the intuition that Dave does not know it.⁵ Consider a further question: Why does Dave lack knowledge via the “special feeling” method? I suspect that many will share my intuition that Dave lacks knowledge via the specified method because he’s in a position to know that forming beliefs in that way is unreliable. Here, the first intuition indicates *that* (T) is false, being a straightforward counterexample to it, while the second intuition indicates *why* (T) is false. Both intuitions appear to provide us with a good reason to disbelieve (T).⁶

⁴This case is from Weinberg, et al. (2001, 36).

⁵It may be of note that unlike other hypothetical cases which Weinberg, et al. (2001) put to their subjects, this case elicited the same judgment in all but a very small minority of the subjects.

⁶Joel Pust has aptly pointed out to me that the example with (T) and the Coin flip case may be unsound. For (T) holds that it is not a necessary condition of knowing *p* by method *M* that one lack reason to think *M* unreliable. But Dave’s not knowing via the special feeling in the coin flip case doesn’t obviously falsify (T) as Dave might fail some other necessary condition of knowledge. However, in the Coinflip Case the belief and truth conditions for knowledge are satisfied, and there is no gettierization. That leaves the justification condition, which appears to be the only condition lacking in the Coinflip Case. Thus, in order for Pust’s unsoundness worry to stick, it must be the case that the justification condition may be satisfied even when one is in a position to know that *M* is unreliable. However, my intuition is that being in such a position always prevents one from satisfying the justification condition and for that reason prevents one from having

Other examples from philosophical literature will be familiar: Searle's Chinese nation, Thompson's violinist, Putnam's Twin Earth, Lehrer's gypsy lawyer, and Jackson's Mary. In such cases, hypothetical scenarios like the Coinflip Case are constructed and then used to elicit an intuition with respect to some target philosophical thesis. One's intuition is then treated as evidence either for or against that thesis.

But reflection on hypothetical cases is not always necessary for having an intuition. Take the following claims:

De Morgan. $p \& q$ is equivalent to $\neg(\neg p \vee \neg q)$.

Negation Elimination. $\neg\neg p$ is equivalent to p .

Parthood's Transitivity. If x is part of y and y is part of z , then x is part of z .

Leibniz's Law. If $x = y$, then anything true of x is also true of y .

For many, simply considering these propositions will bring about the intuition that these propositions are true and reflection on hypothetical cases is unnecessary.

There are different locutions used to refer to intuitions. Above I relied on the locution 'has the intuition that' to identify the target contentful mental state I intend to give an account of (i.e., *intuiting*) because it was natural to do so. 'Intuition' is not a philosopher's term of art, but a term commonly used in natural language to refer to the target mental state. Nevertheless,

knowledge.

other locutions could have served the same purpose. For example, I could have said that to many it will *seem to be case that* Dave does not have knowledge via the “special feelings” method, or again, to many it will *appear to be the case that* Dave does not have knowledge via the “special feelings” method. There are still other locutions that would have done equally well: ‘it is *obvious that...*’, ‘it is *clear that...*’, and ‘one can *see that...*’. Each of these expressions are natural ways of referring to a familiar type of propositional attitude had in response to considering hypothetical cases and propositions like the ones above.

In what follows I will use the term ‘intuition’ to name the general type of contentful mental state gestured at above. The plural form of this term, ‘intuitions’, will also be used to refer to that type of mental state, but it will also be used to refer to tokens of this type of mental state, where context will clarify the intended denotation. This understanding of the reference of the term ‘intuition’ should be understood as distinct from the locutions ‘has an intuition that’ and ‘intuits that’ which typically refer to the *contents* of tokens of that general type of mental state. It should be noted that commitment to there being intuitions does not entail a commitment to the more robust thesis that there is a unique cognitive faculty which is itself solely responsible for every tokening of the type. Finally, to admit that such things as intuitions exist does not commit one to the existence of *a priori* justification; though many proponents of the epistemic value of intuition take it to be a source of

a priori justification, one need not do so.⁷

In what follows I offer a reductive account of what it is to have an intuition. This project may be viewed as an attempt to satisfy the following schema:

For S to intuit that p just is for S to ϕ that p .

Here, the ‘just is’ relation is taken to be a reductive equivalence relation, where what appears on the right-hand-side specifies what it is to have an intuition in the sense that intuiting that p is nothing other than ϕ -ing that p . Yet for an instance of ϕ to be plausible there are two criteria it must satisfy. First, it must be *extensionally adequate* in the sense that, necessarily, one intuits that p iff one ϕ s that p . Typically, we test for extensional adequacy by considering, for any given substitution of ϕ , whether or not one can intuit without ϕ -ing, or vice versa. If so, one’s substitution for ϕ cannot be correct. Second, it must be *qualitatively adequate*, that is, the properties of intuiting must likewise be properties of ϕ -ing. Otherwise, by Leibniz’s Law, we must regard intuiting and ϕ -ing as distinct states.

2.2 On Seemings

My reductive analysis of intuitions (to be introduced) will involve the claim that intuitions are a kind of seeming. So before I introduce and defend

⁷Bealer (1998), Pust (2000), and BonJour (1998) each take intuition to be a source of *a priori* justification, whereas Kornblith (2002, 7-8) and Devitt (2010, 292) take intuition to be, at best, a source of *a posteriori* justification. Williamson (2007) and Hawthorne (2007) abjure the distinction between these two kinds of justification altogether.

my theory of intuition's nature, I will need to say some things about the nature of seemings. In section 2.2.1 I characterize certain distinguishing characteristics of seemings, and in section 2.2.2 I argue that seemings are a *sui generis* propositional attitude.

2.2.1 The Phenomenology of Seemings

Seemings are, I think, quite common and detached from anything peculiar to philosophical investigation. To fix ideas here consider your immediate environment and how you might describe it. Your description, you should notice, will be constituted by a series of propositions each of which *seems true*. For example, as I write this I sit in my office, and my immediate environment is (partially) described by the following:

(A1) There is a shelf of books to my left.

(A2) There are many pencils to my right.

(A3) The books outnumber the pencils.

Each of these propositions seem true to me, and they seem true to me because of the particular visual experience I'm having as I write. But these are not the only propositions that seem true to me as I write. Upon consideration, the following also seem true:

(B1) There was a fireplace in my childhood home.

(B2) I'm not presently in any pain.

(B3) I'm not-not-not presently in any pain.

It is in virtue of having certain memorial experiences that (B1) seems true (I clearly recall my childhood home). (B2) seems true to me in virtue of my introspective awareness of my own mental life. And (B3) seems true to me not immediately, but because (B2) seems true and because I can “see” that (B3) must be true given (B2).

There are several things to note about seemings. *First*, seemings are a kind of *propositional attitude*, i.e., they are a mental state whose object is a proposition. *Second*, seemings are a kind of propositional attitude that *represent* the world as being a certain way: for it to seem true that a cat is hairy is, partly, for one to be in a mental state that represents the world as being such that a cat is hairy is true. Seemings are like beliefs in this respect: to believe that p is (partly) to represent the world as being such that p is true of it. *Third*, part of what distinguishes seemings from other representational propositional attitudes is, for lack of a better term, their *phenomenological texture*. The language used to characterize the phenomenological aspect of seemings varies but it’s all of a kind. Tolhurst describes seemings as having “the feel of truth” or “the feel of a state whose content reveals how things really are.”⁸ Huemer refers to it as the “forcefulness” of seemings, and characterizes seemings as a kind of propositional attitude that “represent their contents *as actualized*.”⁹ Tucker describes this as the “assertiveness” of seemings, which he further describes as being the sort of state that “recommends” or

⁸Tolhurst (1998, 298-299).

⁹Huemer (2001, 22, 77-9).

“assures” us of the truth of its content.¹⁰ Pryor, helpfully describes this phenomenology:

Our experiences represent propositions in such a way that it “feels as if” we could tell that those propositions are true—and that we’re perceiving them to be true—just by virtue of having them so represented. (Of course, to be able to articulate this “feeling” takes a high grade of reflective awareness.) I think this “feeling” is part of what distinguishes the attitude of experiencing that *p* from other propositional attitudes, like belief and visual imagination. Beliefs and visual images might come to us irresistibly, without having that kind of “phenomenal force.” ... It is difficult to explain what this “phenomenal force” amounts to...¹¹

Let us refer to this difficult-to-describe phenomenal quality of seemings by saying that seemings are *alethically presentational states*, where anything counts as an alethically presentational state just in case it has the sort of phenomenology characteristic of seemings.¹²

¹⁰Tucker (2010, 530).

¹¹Pryor (2000, 547). See also Pryor (2004: 356-357), Chudnoff (forthcoming), and Siegel (2011).

¹²Chudnoff (forthcoming) offers the following account of (alethically) presentational phenomenology: “What it is for an experience to have presentational phenomenology with respect to *p* is for it to both represent that *p* and make it seem as if you are aware of a truth-maker for *p*.” In conversation, Chudnoff has clarified that this was not meant to be an account of the *nature* of presentational phenomenology (as the expression ‘what it is for...is for...’ suggests), rather, it an account of that *in virtue of which* an experience has presentational phenomenology. Although I think his account serves reasonably well concerning our normal introspective, perceptual, and quasi-perceptual memorial experiences, I doubt it will hold up in the case of intuitive experiences and merely propositional memo-

Fourth, although this will not play a significant role in what follows, there is one further possible aspect of the phenomenology of seemings that is of interest. It is what we might call their *epistemic presentationality*. When a proposition seems true it is presented to one in such a way that it feels as if that proposition is something one has good epistemic reason to believe. Seemings, in some sense, commend their contents for belief. Arguably, this sort of presentationality is not to be mistaken with any aspect of the content of a seeming, it is rather a part of the way in which a seeming presents its content.

However, it is also arguable that this so-called epistemic presentationality can be given an eliminative analysis in the following way:

(Elimination) (A) There is no epistemic presentationality; this term does not refer to any unique phenomenological aspect of seeming states. The reason it seems as if there is epistemic presentationality is owed to the fact that (B) when a proposition p seems true, at least upon consideration, it would (at least typically) also seem true that one has an (epistemic) reason to believe p .

My disagreement lies not with (B), but (A). But even if (A) is correct, it will not affect any of the arguments to follow, which only require seemings to be

rial experiences. For in such experiences it seems dubious that one seems to be aware of some further object which is a truth-maker for what intuitively or memorially seems true. See The Problem of Intuitions in section 2.2.2.

alethically presentational states.¹³

Finally, seemings appear to be essentially occurrent mental states. For it's hard to even imagine what it would be like for a proposition to seem true without it's content being part of your conscious experience. Notice, the claim isn't that p cannot seem true unless one is conscious *that it seems true that p* . Rather the claim of essential occurrence concerns only the first-order state. In this way seemings are more like reflecting than believing: whereas one can have non-occurrent beliefs, one cannot non-occurrently reflect on anything.¹⁴

In summary, I have noted four principal properties of seemings: seemings are essentially a kind of (P1) propositional attitude that is (P2) representational, (P3) alethically presentational, (P4) epistemically presentational, and (P5) essentially occurrent.

¹³Seeming states also appear to be *self-presenting states*, states which are such that if one is in it, one is, in some sense, in a position to know that they are in it. Perhaps the way to characterize this is as follows:

If p seems true to S , then if S were to consider the question (with understanding) whether p seems true, then ' p seems true to S ' would also seem true to S .

The converse of this must be denied, for often it is the case that we are presented to in certain ways, though we are unaware of the further fact that we are presented to in such-n-such a way. Self-presentation plays a crucial role in some (access) internalist epistemologies, e.g., Chisholm (1982, 9-11). The epistemology of intuition I defend in the next chapter does not rely on this aspect of seemings.

¹⁴Compare Bealer (1998) and Pust (2000).

2.2.2 Seemings are Distinct from Canonical Experiences/Attitudes

There are certain canonical experiential states and propositional attitudes that are closely related to seemings, but should be regarded as distinct from them. These canonical experiences and propositional attitudes include the following: perceptual, introspective, and memorial experiences as well as propositional attitudes such as belief, the attraction to believe, and the disposition to believe. A question arises as to the relationship between seemings and these other contentful mental states. Some have held the view that seemings are not *sui generis* states, but are rather to be reduced to some other kind (or perhaps kinds) of canonical mental state. I reject this. My view is that seemings are a *sui generis* propositional attitude, irreducible to other sorts of experiences and attitudes.¹⁵ The principal reason to regard seemings as *sui generis* is that no reduction of seemings to some other canonical experience or propositional attitude is going to be extensionally or qualitatively adequate. That is, for any proposed reduction we can either point to obvious counterexamples or to some paradigmatic property a seeming has but the proposed reductive state lacks.

Let's start by considering some propositional attitudes with which one might try to identify seemings: belief, the attraction to believe, and the disposition to believe. It is clear that seemings are distinct from beliefs. A

¹⁵Tucker (2010c) and Cullison (2010) also hold this view. Bealer (1998) clearly maintains that *intuitive* seemings are distinct from these other states, but he at least appears to maintain that other kinds of seemings *are* reducible to some of these states. For example, Bealer writes: "sense perception is a *sensory* seeming," (1998, 208). Tolhurst (1998, 300) and Huemer (2001, 58-79) appear to hold something similar to Bealer.

proposition can seem true without being believed. Consider the Muller-Lyer illusion: when presented with the lines it seems to be the case that they are of different lengths, but we know better than to (and so we don't) believe it. Or consider the naive comprehension axiom: it seems true, but, again, we know better than to (and so we don't) believe it.¹⁶

Might seemings be reducible to having a disposition to believe? An initial problem, noted by Pust, is that it is by no means clear that dispositions to believe are even mental states.¹⁷ For example, take someone who has recently suffered brain death: such a one has a disposition to have further thoughts were their brain to be “revived” (such things do occur), but it is far from clear that a brain dead person is in any kind of mental state while brain dead. But even if such dispositions are mental states there is a more serious problem. The disposition to believe is not itself a propositional attitude, it's a disposition to have a propositional attitude. So no dispositional account of seemings will do. One further problem with this account has to do with the essential occurrence of seemings: dispositions are not essentially occurrent.

Might seemings, then, be identifiable with the attraction to believe? Sosa and others maintain that they are.¹⁸ One advantage of this view is that it

¹⁶Bealer (1998).

¹⁷Pust (forthcoming).

¹⁸Sosa (2007, chapter 3) treats seemings as attractions to “assent” but he refrains from offering any contrast between belief and assent. Moreover, in his subsequent characterization of his own view (Sosa (2009, 142)) he chooses the term ‘belief’ rather than ‘assent’. Accordingly, I interpret Sosa’s position as one where belief and assent refer to the same kind of mental state. Boghossian (2009) has also interpreted Sosa this way. For others who appear to endorse this view see Lynch (2006) and Williamson (2007).

will not be challenged by the essentially occurrent nature of seemings, for attractions are, intuitively, essentially occurrent.¹⁹ Moreover, we are attracted to believe what seems true. So the view that seemings are attractions to believe is much more plausible than the previous options.

But even so there are several problems with this view. *First*, one can have an attraction to believe something without it seeming to be true.²⁰ For example, one can have practical reasons that generate an attraction to believe a proposition that does not seem true: offering a poor man a million dollars to believe that the moon is made of cheese will generate an attraction to believe it, though this will not make the proposition seem true.²¹ *Second*, seemings are representational states, but attractions to believe are not representational states; attractions to believe are attractions to be in a representational state, namely, belief. One may try to resuscitate this view by claiming its seeming true that p is an attraction to believe p where one also puts some small degree of belief in p . But the trouble with this view is that there are propositions which seem true though we put no credence in them. For example, while looking at the Muller-Lyer illusion it seems true that one line is longer than the other. Although there may be some lingering attraction to believe it, I do not believe it—not even to some small degree. *Third*, seemings have a phenomenology that attractions to believe do not. Seemings are alethically presentational states, but attractions to believe need not be, as witnessed by

¹⁹See Sosa (2007, chapter 3).

²⁰Huemer (2007), Cullison (2010), and Pust (forthcoming).

²¹See also Cullison (2010, 264-65).

the fact that one can be attracted to believe something that does not seem true for practical reasons. *Fourth*, as Huemer has pointed out, it is natural for us to explain our attraction to believe at least some things in terms of what seems true. But if seemings are attractions to believe then such explanations are, at best, trivially true.²²

Finally, and somewhat tendentiously, when it seems to be the case that p , that seeming is appropriately treated as an epistemic reason to believe p ;²³ but attractions to believe are too desire-like and thus inappropriate to be treated as epistemic reasons for belief. In response to this those who wishing to maintain that seemings are reducible to attractions may emphasize that it's not attractions *simpliciter* which have the ability to rationally ground belief; rather, it's attractions *to believe which occur in specific circumstances* that have this ability. For example, suppose one held that seemings are attractions which arise from certain kinds of epistemically suitable experiences (e.g., perceptual, memorial, introspective experiences). Arguably, such attractions may not be inappropriate epistemic grounds for belief. But there is a problem: take *hoping that*, *wishing that*, *being suspicious that*, *worrying that*, *being happy that*, *being attracted to consider*, *being attracted to conjecture*, *being attracted to wonder whether*, *etc.* These are attitudes one could have due to perceptual, memorial, or introspective experiences; e.g., it could be that when one has a perceptual experience as of a cat one *hopes that there*

²²Huemer (2007).

²³See sections 2.3.1 and 4.1-4.3 for a defense of this.

is a cat or *is attracted to wonder whether there is a cat*.²⁴ But, presumably, such states cannot serve as rational foundations for believing that there is a cat: it would be irrational to base one's belief *that there is a cat* on the fact that one has any of the above attitudes towards that content, even if that attitude were the result of one's perceptual experience which had the same content. But why, then, can *attractions to believe* serve as rational foundations if these other states cannot? There must be something about this kind of state, the state of being attracted to believe, that makes it the sort of state that is suitable for rationally grounding belief. But I see no relevant difference between it and, at least some of, these other states. So assuming seemings can serve as rational foundations (something I will argue for in section 4), we have reason to resist the attraction view.

An alternative reductive strategy, then, is to deny that seemings are a *sui generis* propositional attitude by identifying seemings with (perhaps some aspect of) certain kinds of contentful experiences that have properties (P1)-(P5). For example, take your present visual experience as of English text. Upon having this visual experience and considering the proposition "there is English text nearby," it will seem true to you that there is English text nearby. On the present view, this seeming is not to be construed as a propositional attitude distinct from your perceptual experience, but it is rather to be identified with some aspect of your present perceptual experience. This

²⁴Perhaps some such cases will involve a bit of deviant psychology, for typically one's competent grasp of concepts in *p* will not bring it about that one is, say, happy that *p*. However, we can imagine such a possibility, which is all the objection needs.

sort of view has merit insofar as perceptual and introspective experiences as well as certain kinds of memorial experiences have representational content that is alethically and epistemically presentational.²⁵ On this view, then, seemings are not a natural kind of mental state but are rather a class of mental states unified by their having properties (P1)-(P5).

The thesis under consideration, then, is this:

SEEMINGS AS A LESS-THAN-PERFECTLY-NATURAL KIND (SLK)

Seemings are not a *sui generis* mental state. For a proposition p to seem true to S is just for S to be in some token mental state that (i) has p as a content and (ii) is such that (P1)-(P5) hold of that state. Such mental states include, but might not be limited to, perceptual experiences, introspective experiences, and certain kinds of memorial experiences.²⁶

However there are several difficulties facing (SLK), problems that simply evaporate if one grants that seemings are a mental state in their own right. Here are the problems:

The Propositional Content Problem. Although perceptual, introspective, and certain memorial experiences have representational *content*, it is not clear that the contents of such experi-

²⁵Pryor (2004: 356-357), Martin (2002, 399), Heck (2000, 518), and Siegel (2010).

²⁶As is standard, talk of perceptual, introspective, and memorial experiences is to be understood non-factively: one can have a perceptual experience without perceiving, one can have a memorial experience without remembering, one can have an introspective experience without correctly introspecting.

ences are *propositions*. For example, one’s visual experiences or quasi-visual memorial experiences are as of *objects having certain properties*, not *propositions about* objects having certain properties. But seemings have propositions as contents. Similarly, in the case of introspection, when one is in pain one is aware of *pain*, but pain is no proposition. But in order for (SLK) to be true, these experiences must be propositional attitudes.²⁷

The Seemings Explanation: Seemings have properties (P1)-(P5) and can occur in virtue of, though they remain distinct from, one’s perceptual, introspective, and memorial experiences. Thus, for example, when one has a perceptual experience as of *p*, it can, other things being equal, cause some propositional description of the

²⁷Although some have argued that perceptual experience is a propositional attitude (see Byrne (2005) and McDowell (1994)) there remains good reason to resist the thesis. *First*, as just mentioned, it is decidedly unnatural to *identify* (as opposed to *describe*) the content of experience with a *proposition* about an object; as Crane notes: in veridical experience “you hear *the sound* of the coach on the cobbles; you taste *the sourness* of the wine; you feel *the ferns* tickling your leg” (Crane (2008, 465) emphasis mine). (In the case of hallucinatory and illusory experiences, one has only *apparent* perceptual experiences as of such objects.) *Second*, the accuracy of the content of perceptual experience admits of degrees, but a proposition’s accuracy (= its truth) does not, i.e., a perceptual experience’s content can be more or less accurate depending on how well it represents what it is about while a proposition cannot be more or less true (Crane (2008, 458); cf. Siegel (2010, 30-33)). *Third*, *events* can be the content of a perceptual experience, but events cannot be the content of a propositional attitude, e.g., one experiences the event of *falling rain*, but one does not believe or hope *that falling rain* (Crane (2008, 464)). *Fourth*, we can perform logical operations on the contents of propositional attitudes, but not on the contents of experience, e.g., what might the negation of one’s perceptual experience of *falling rain* or *the sound of the coach* amount to? (Crane (2008, 462)).

content of one's perceptual experience to seem true.²⁸

The Problem of Modally and Probabilistically Qualified Content.

Some of the propositions that seem true involve modal and probabilistic concepts in a way that our perceptual, memorial, and introspective experiences do not. For instance, suppose you were to see a bird nearby by in optimal perceptual circumstances. Upon reflection, it would not only seem true to you *that there is a bird nearby*, but also: *that it is probable that a bird is nearby*, and *that it is possible that that bird might not have been nearby*. Although such seemings may depend on one's perceptual experience, it is arguably not part of one's perceptual experience: for perceptual experience purports to present us with how the world *is* not how it *probably* is, or *possibly* is, or *might not be*. (We could easily add examples involving memorial and introspective experiences.) Again in order for (SLK) to be true there must be some *sui generis* mental state that has properties (P1)-(P5) that has the specified modally and probabilistically qualified content.

The Seemings Explanation. A seeming state is a kind of *sui generis* mental state that has properties (P1)-

²⁸If the objection holds up, then we cannot say that the perceptual experience with content *p* makes *p* seem true without obfuscating matters. For the *p*-ish content of experience is, on this view, not a proposition, while the *p*-ish content of a seeming is a proposition. For convenience in what follows I will ignore this point, and simply speak as if the very same content can be shared between seemings and perceptual, introspective, etc., experiences.

(P5) and hosts the modally and probabilistically qualified propositions.²⁹ In the cases specified above, the seemings are partly owed to one's present perceptual experience as of a bird. It's hard to say what else these seemings are owed to. But this is not the unique burden of *sui generis* seemings theorists for anyone who grants that such modally and probabilistically qualified propositions can seem true owes such an explanation.

The Problem of Mixed Contents. Consider the conjunction of two simple contents of some distinct presentational states, e.g., one's introspective experience *that I'm in pain* and one's perceptual experience *that there is printed English text here*. Plausibly, not only can these propositions seem true individually, but so can their conjunction. But *the conjunction* itself cannot be part of either type of experience (one cannot see pain nor can one introspect printed English text). What is needed, then, for (SLK) to be viable is for there to be some further sort of *sui generis* mental state that has properties (P1)-(P3) and can have that conjunctive proposition as a content.

The Seemings Explanation: A seeming state is a kind of *sui generis* mental state that has properties (P1)-

²⁹By "hosting propositions" I simply mean "has the specified propositions as contents".

(P5) and can host the conjunctive proposition. When seemings do so, it is typically because the individual conjuncts each seem true and because their conjunction obviously follows.

The Problem of Persisting Seemings. Suppose you were holding as well as reading a printed version of this paper in an isolated environment (e.g., the middle of some desert). In such a circumstance it would seem true to you that there is English text nearby because of your visual experience as of English text. However, that seeming can persist even when your visual experience has changed so that it's no longer of English text. For example, if you were to close your eyes while still holding the document or if you were to turn your head so that the text was just barely in the periphery of your vision, it would still seem true that there is English text nearby even though your visual experience ceased to be as of English text. But then the seeming is not essentially part of your perceptual experience; neither is the seeming part of some tactile or memorial experience: one cannot feel printed text nor does one recall how things *are*, but rather how things *were*.³⁰ Again in order for (SLK) to be true there must be some *sui generis* mental state that has properties (P1)-(P5) that has

³⁰To say that this content is not part of your memorial experience is not to say that your memorial experiences are irrelevant. See the next seemings explanation.

the specified content.

The Seemings Explanation: A seeming state is a kind of *sui generis* mental state that has properties (P1)-(P5) and hosts the proposition that there is English text nearby. In this case the seeming is partly explained by one's memory of one's previous visual experience. It is hard to say what else together with one's memory explains the seeming, but lack of an easy explanation here is no mark against the *sui generis* seemings theorist, for this is an explanation everyone must provide—well, at least everyone who grants that there are seemings about our immediate environment that were but are not longer contents of one's perceptual experience.

The Presentational Enrichment Problem. Suppose you were looking at an abnormal chess board: instead of having 8 squares on each side of its perimeter it has 5. Under normal visual circumstances, you would be having a visual experience as of a checkered surface. But you would not be having a visual experiences that *presents* you with a 25-squared checkered surface, even though the board has as many squares. It's just too many squares for one's visual experience to present to one. But to anyone reasonably competent in basic arithmetic it will seem true that there is

a checkered surface with 25 squares. It is implausible to maintain that after doing the math the presentational aspect *of one's visual experience* has been enriched so as to include the content that there are 25 squares on the board.³¹ Yet the proposition that there are 25 squares on the board seems true.³² Again in order for (SLK) to be true there must be some *sui generis* mental state that has properties (P1)-(P5) that has the specified content.

The Seemings Explanation: A seeming state is a kind of *sui generis* mental state that has properties (P1)-(P5) and hosts the proposition that there is a checkered surface with 25 squares. This particular seeming is explained by one's particular visual experience, one's ability to count the number of squares on the perimeter of the checkered board and do the relevant math.

The Problem of Intuitions. When one has an intuition that p , p seems true. Call such seemings 'intuitive seemings'. In order for (SLK) to hold, there must be some *sui generis* mental state that has properties (P1)-(P5) that hosts the content of intuitive seemings. Perceptual, memorial, and introspective experiences

³¹I'm taking for granted the idea that perceptual experiences can have representational content that is not (alethically or epistemically) presentational.

³²Siegel (2010) argues that the content of perceptual experience can be enriched in certain ways. But my argument here is not that perceptual experience *cannot* be enriched, but that there are *some* cases where it is not enriched in ways that correspond to what seems true.

are obviously not candidates for this. What we need then to account for intuitive seemings is some mental state having properties (P1)-(P5), but none is forthcoming.^{33,34}

The Seemings Explanation. A seemings theorist can claim that seemings are the *sui generis* mental state that has properties (P1)-(P5) and hosts the content of intuitions.

In summary, we have a series of problems facing (SLK). Each of these problems is resolvable if seemings are themselves a *sui generis* propositional

³³We may be able to raise a similar problem concerning proprioception, which, like intuitions, does not appear to be accompanied by anything like a sense perceptive state.

³⁴Some have held that there are *sui generis* intuitive experiences which are quasi-perceptual in nature. However, those who have held this view have maintained that the content of these experiences is objectual, i.e., is of abstract objects and structures, and not of propositions. (For proponents of this in the special case of mathematical intuition see Gödel (1964), Parsons (1995) and (2000), Katz (1998, 44-45). For a proponent of this in the case of intuition generally see Chudnoff (2010) and (forthcoming).) However, I, like Sosa (2007, chapter 3), find the idea of objectual intuitive experiences difficult to accept (at least across the board). When I consider whether (i) *2+2=4 is necessarily true* or whether (ii) *justified beliefs can be false*, both claims seem true to me but I do not detect any experience in addition to these proposition's seeming to be true. There is no quasi-perceptual intuitive experience I have in virtue of which they seem true.

Although I'm happy to grant that there can be an *imaginative* experiences that can play some role here. I can imagine two pairs of objects "coming together" and creating a foursome where this helps me understand the claim that $2+2=4$, and I can imagine a circumstance where some arbitrary thinker has a justified false belief. But in neither case can the seemings be identified with the imaginative experience. The chief problem being that imaginative experiences are neither representational nor presentational. To *imagine* a flower sprouting from my forehead and catching fire is not to represent it as being true nor it is it presented to me as being true. See (Huemer (2001)). But a further problem may concern the content of what is imagined. The content of (i) and (ii) include the modal concepts of necessity and possibility, but it's unclear whether such concepts can be pictured or otherwise represented in the imagination. What one pictures in the imagination is people having false beliefs and groups of objects forming larger groups, but where's the necessity or possibility of this? (Answer: it is intuited.)

attitude distinct from other canonical propositional attitudes and experiences. In the absence of any better resolution and explanation, we have a strong abductive reason to maintain that seemings are a perfectly natural *sui generis*, irreducible propositional attitude that stands alongside other canonical propositional attitudes and experiences.

2.3 Intuitions as Seemings

Intuitions in my view are just a certain sort of seeming. *Roughly*, my view is that intuitions are seemings which do not occur in virtue of “empirical” experience. Section 2.3.1 clarifies this claim. Sections 2.3.2-2.3.4 defend the extensional and qualitative adequacy of my account of intuitions. Since my account differs from other accounts of the nature of intuition, especially so-called “philosophical” intuitions, section 2.3.2 shows how my account can accommodate pre-existing theories of the nature of “philosophical” intuitions. Section 2.3.3 responds to possible counterexamples to my theory. Section 2.3.4 defends the qualitative adequacy of my account of intuitions as a kind of seeming.

2.3.1 What Intuitions Are

Now, upon consideration, propositions other than (A1)-(B3) seem true to me as I write. For instance, I have, upon reflection, the following intuitions:

(C1) If a statement is metaphysically necessarily true, then it is

true.

(C2) It is possible to have a justified false belief.

(C3) Two morally assessable actions in type-identical circumstances cannot differ in moral status.

For one to intuit these propositions is for one to be in an occurrent contentful mental state that is both a propositional attitude and representational. For example, to have *the intuition that it's possible to have a justified false belief* is to be in a mental state that *occurently represents* a certain *proposition* as correctly describing the world. Is one's intuition essentially occurrent? It's hard to even imagine what it would be like to intuit *p* without it's content being part of your conscious experience. Notice, the claim isn't that one cannot intuit that *p* without being aware *that one is intuiting that p*. Rather the claim of essential occurrence concerns only the first-order state. In this way intuiting is more like reflecting than believing: whereas one can have non-occurrent beliefs (e.g., dispositional beliefs), one cannot non-occurrently reflect on anything. No one writing on intuitions doubts that intuitions *can* be occurrent, and some take *essential* occurrence to be a crucial ingredient of any plausible theory of intuition.³⁵

³⁵See Bealer (1998) and Pust (2000). See also Sosa (2007). In any case, for the purposes of upholding my account of intuitions as seemings, all I will need is the weaker claim that intuitions can be non-occurrent iff seemings can be also. Let me mention one poor reason for thinking that intuitions (and seemings) can be non-occurrent: the fact that one has a disposition to have certain intuitions and seemings. We must carefully separate the *disposition* to be in a state from being in that state. Even in the case of belief we must, as Audi (1994) has argued, distinguish dispositional *beliefs* from dispositions *to believe*, where the former, but not latter, are beliefs.

Maintaining that having an intuition is a representational propositional attitude is not an entirely uncontroversial point. For instance, those who hold that intuitions are dispositions to believe, must grant that intuiting that p is not even a *propositional attitude* much less a representational one. Rather, they must hold that intuiting is a disposition to have such an attitude. Similarly, those who hold that intuitions are attractions to believe, must deny that intuiting that p is a *representational* propositional attitude.³⁶ For, on such a view, an intuition is just an *attraction* to be in representational state.

Both views are problematic for nothing is intuited unless it is represented to one as being correct. Consider the oddity of someone claiming the following:

(Oddity) I have the intuition that p , but p does not have even slightest appearance of being true.

Although I think we should parse the phrase “having the slightest appearance of being true” in terms of seemings, this does not matter. What matters is that it is a way of indicating that p is being *represented* to one as correct. Arguably, what’s odd about affirming instances of (Oddity) is that doing involves the simultaneous affirmation and denial that p is being represented to one as true.

³⁶Sosa (2007), Lynch (2006), Nimtz (2010), and Earlenbaugh and Molyneux (2009) all hold that intuitions are attractions to believe. However, Nimtz and Earlenbaugh and Molyneux hold the interesting view that there are seemings (in something like my sense above) but they deny that *intuitions* are seemings. By contrast, Sosa (2007) holds the view that seemings just are attractions to believe. It is unclear what Lynch’s settled view is.

Permutations of the attraction view will not salvage the account from this particular criticism.³⁷ For example, suppose one claimed that intuiting p is the attraction to believe p *plus having some, possibly small, degree of belief in* p . Since even a very weak belief is a representational propositional attitude, one might think the account saved. But there are counterexamples owing to the existence of propositions we intuit but fail to even weakly believe. For instance, consider the following:

(C4) There are more even and odd numbers than there are even numbers.

(C5) For every condition C there is a set that consists of just those things that satisfy C .

(C6) Simultaneity is transitive. If $e1$ occurs at the same time as $e2$, and $e2$ occurs at the same time as $e3$, then $e1$ occurs at the same time as $e3$.

Again, and for familiar reasons, I believe these not even a little even though I have the intuition that they are true.³⁸

³⁷Sosa once held the dispositional view (see Sosa (1996) and (1998)), but this view has been roundly criticized by Pust (2000), and none seem to defend it anymore. I will not rehearse all objections and counters to that view, rather I will concentrate on issues pertaining to attraction view, which is the chief rival to the view I defend here. Similarly, I will ignore the view that intuitions are beliefs, it too being in wide disrepute due to familiar counterexamples (e.g., the existence of unbelieved intuitions).

³⁸We have mathematical proofs which indicate that all countably infinite sets are of the same cardinality; we have Russell's paradox which shows us that there cannot be a set for every condition; and we have Einstein's theory of relativity which has shown us that simultaneity is relative to a frame of reference, so (C6) cannot be true without relativization to some such frame.

Another problem with the attraction to believe view is that attractions to believe (qua attraction) are not *alethically presentational*, but intuitions are alethically presentational states.³⁹ When one considers Gettier cases, its as if one can just “see” that justified true belief is insufficient for knowledge. Similarly, when one intuits (C1), (C2), and (C3) its as if one can just “see” that they’re true. Because visual experience is clearly an alethically presentational state, the visual metaphor here is telling, and it is no accident that philosophers have often been tempted to employ it in descriptions of intuition.⁴⁰

A final problem with the attraction view is that attractions appear to be, while intuitions do not appear to be, inappropriate bases for belief. In response, those who maintain the attraction view will emphasize that it’s not attractions *simpliciter* which have the ability to rationally ground belief.

³⁹For others who defend the idea that intuitions have alethically presentational phenomenology see Bengson (MS) and Chudnoff (2011) and (forthcoming).

⁴⁰Bengson (2010) offers various arguments for the view that intuitions are alethically presentational states, one of which is that it explains the pervasive use of perceptual language to describe what happens when one has an intuition. Here are some examples he gives:

Locke (1689, IV.2.i) emphasis mine: (T)he Mind...*perceives* the Truth, as the Eye doth light, only by being directed towards it. The Mind *perceives*, that White is not Black, That a Circle is not a Triangle, That Three are more than Two, and equal to One and Two...by bare Intuition...”

Spinoza (1677, 2p40s2) emphasis mine: “Given the numbers 1, 2, and 3...we arrive at the fourth number (6) from the ratio which, in one intuition (uno intuito), we *see* (videmus) the first number to have to the second.”

Ayer (1946, 79) emphasis mine: “If one knows what is the function of the words ‘either’, ‘or’, and ‘not’, then one can *see* that any proposition of the form ‘Either p is true or p is not true’ is valid, independently of experience.”

Rather, they maintain that it's attractions *to believe which occur in specific circumstances* that have this ability. For example, Sosa's view is that intuitions are attractions to believe *that are grounded in one's competent grasp of the concepts involved*, and that *these* attractions have the ability to rationally ground belief.⁴¹ But there is a problem: take *hoping that, wishing that, being suspicious that, worrying that, being happy that, being attracted to consider, being attracted to conjecture, being attracted to wonder whether, etc.* These are attitudes one could have been due to one's competent grasp of the concepts involved.⁴² But, presumably, such states cannot serve as rational foundations for belief: it would be irrational to base one's belief in p on the fact that one has any of the above attitudes towards p , even if that attitude were the result of one's competent grasp of the concepts involved. But why, then, can *attractions to believe* serve as rational foundations if these other states cannot? There must be something about this kind of state, the state of being attracted to believe, that makes it the sort of state that is suitable for rationally grounding belief. But I see no relevant difference between it and, at least some of, these other states. So assuming we are right that intuitions can serve as rational foundations, we have reason to resist the attraction view.

⁴¹Sosa (2007, 60-61).

⁴²Perhaps some such cases will involve a bit of deviant psychology, for typically one's competent grasp of concepts in p will not bring it about that one is, say, happy that p . However, we can imagine such a possibility, which is all the objection needs.

Where, then, does this leave us? What, then, are intuitions? We have observed that intuitions are a kind of occurrent representational propositional attitude that is not reducible to beliefs, the attraction to believe, or dispositions to believe. Moreover we have observed that intuitions are not only alethically presentational, but seem to be epistemically presentational as well. In short, intuitions have properties (P1)-(P5).

As noted above, seemings also have (P1)-(P5). So what is the relation between seemings and intuitions? Consider (C1)-(C3). They seem true, and the way in which they seem true does not appear to differ from the way in which (A1)-(B3) seem true. When I turn my mind from (A1) to (B1) and then to (C1) each proposition seems true in the same manner. What differs, however, is that in virtue of which each seems true: (A1)-(A3) seem true to me at least partly in virtue of the particular visual experience I'm having as I write, while (B1)-(B3) seem true to me at least partly in virtue of certain memorial and introspective experiences I have. In the case of (C1)-(C3) I cannot easily say just why (C1)-(C3) seem true to me; I find myself unable to easily "point to" anything that plays the same role as my conscious perceptual, introspective, and memorial experiences with respect to (A1)-(B3).⁴³ Nevertheless, (C1)-(C3) seem true; upon considering them, it is as if I can just tell that these accurately describe how the world is.

There are two options, then, with regard to the relationship between seemings and intuitions:

⁴³Lynch (2006) refers to this as the "source-opacity" of intuition.

Irreductionism. Intuitions are a *sui generis* mental state having properties (P1)-(P5), which are distinct from, though they bring about, seemings in their content.

Reductionism. Intuitions are *reducible to* seemings of a certain sort. Because seemings have (P1)-(P5), intuitions do also.

Provided we can offer an Reductionist account of intuitions that is both extensionally and qualitatively adequate (in the sense discussed in section 2.1), simplicity mandates that we endorse Reductionism. In the remainder of this section I spell out a Reductionist account of intuitions. In sections 2.3.2-2.3.4 I defend the extensional and qualitative adequacy of the account.

Although it is introspectively unclear just why (C1)-(C3) seem true, it is easy to see that their seeming true has nothing to do with any present perceptual, memorial, or introspective experience I have. This is not peculiar to these intuitions, but it holds of intuitions in general (consider the examples of intuition introduced in section 2.1). My thesis, then, is that intuitions are seemings of a certain sort. Specifically, what distinguishes intuitions from other types of seemings has something to do with that in virtue of which they occur. However, specifying just what it *is* in virtue of that intuitions occur is difficult for at least two reasons. We've already noted the first reason: unlike cases resembling (A1)-(B3), it is often not introspectively obvious just why one intuits what one does. Second, paradigmatic cases of intuitions exhibit a certain degree of disunity that makes suspect the idea that we can say that all intuitions occur in virtue of the same type of thing (see section 2.3.2).

Even so, this difficulty of saying what it is in virtue of does not preclude us from being able to characterize what an intuition is in a useful manner.

To save breath and ink, we'll introduce an abbreviation. Let 'some CEE' abbreviate the following:

SOME CONSCIOUS EMPIRICAL EXPERIENCE

(a) some conscious perceptual or introspective experience, or (b) some conscious memorial experience as of past perceptual or introspective experiences, or (c) some inference involving the contents of (a) and/or (b).

Paradigmatic cases of intuitions involve propositions which seem true though not even partly in virtue of some CEE, which suggests the following account of intuitions:

Intuitions as Seemings (IAS). For S to intuit p (at t) just is for p to seem true to S (at t), but not even partly in virtue of some CEE.⁴⁴

On this view, intuition is not to be identified with any perfectly natural propositional attitude *simpliciter*; rather it is to be identified with a perfectly natural propositional attitude (a seeming) *that occurs in specific circumstances*, i.e., circumstances where the seeming at issue is not even partly owed to some CEE.

⁴⁴This last 'at t ' is redundant insofar as we've defined 'some CEE' in terms of certain *conscious*, and thus occurrent, episodes. However, it has been added for clarity.

Let me clarify some aspects of this account. First, the phrase ‘in virtue of’ can be used to denote a variety of different dependence relations, however not just any dependence relation is suitable for present purposes. The target dependence relation(s) here are any that can *explain why p seems true* in terms of some CEE.⁴⁵ This is a functional characterization of the target in virtue of relation(s), and it leaves open just what specific dependence relation(s) are at issue.⁴⁶ This is a dialectical virtue because it absolves me from having to specify and then argue for substantive claims about (i) the *nature* of perceptual, memorial, and introspective experience and (ii) *how* a proposition p seeming to be true can depend on those experiences in such a way that explain why p seems true. This is acceptable insofar as we are already committed to it being the case *that* there are propositions which seem

⁴⁵For exposition and defense of the idea that in virtue of relations are dependence relations that have explanatory value, see Audi (forthcoming), Fine (2012), Raven (2011), and Rosen (2010).

⁴⁶Here are two possible options. Let a perceptual seeming be any seeming that one has in virtue of one’s conscious perceptual experiences. Take a perceptual seeming with content p . One might maintain that that perceptual seeming is a *constitutive* part of perceptual experience—though this position depends on perceptual experience being a propositional attitude, something we have reason to doubt (see footnote 26). (Concerning constitution, I assume only that if x is constituted by y , then x holds at least partly in virtue of y . Jonathan Schaffer reportedly holds the same view, see Audi (forthcoming, footnote 17).)

But one might maintain that that perceptual seemings are at least partly and appropriately *caused* by one’s perceptual experience. The qualification that the causal dependence be *appropriate* is due to the fact that not every causal dependence relation that can hold between, say, a perceptual experience and a seeming will be such that it explains the seeming. (For example, one may have a bizarre association between candy canes and the mathematical truth that $1+1=2$ such that anytime one has an experience of a candy cane one is caused to reflect on the statement that $1+1=2$. Although $1+1=2$ may seem true whenever one considers it, it’s seeming true is not explained by the experience of a candy cane which causes it.) The constitution view and the causal view are not mutually exclusive positions and both of them specify an in virtue of relation with explanatory merit that holds between the seeming and the perceptual experience.

true, where their seeming true at least partly depends on and is explained by some CEE, e.g., cases like (A1)-(B3) above.⁴⁷

Second, the claim that intuitions are seemings that do not occur in virtue of some CEE involves the qualification that perceptual, introspective, and memorial experiences be *conscious*. This may seem contentious for it threatens to allow, say, seemings that occur in virtue of, say, super blindsight to count as intuitions.⁴⁸ For in such a case certain propositions seem true without one having any conscious perceptual experience. Yet this is a consequence I am comfortable with. Suppose, for example, it seems to one that there is a chair next to the window while one lacks anything resembling a normal perceptual experience as of a chair next to the window or any memory involving such. This is strikingly similar to cases where one intuits that parthood is transitive: in both cases a proposition seems true, but not because of some CEE, and in such a situation it would be quite natural to describe that seemings as an intuition. In connection with this it will help to consider the third point.

Third, my characterization of intuitions does not prevent us from drawing useful distinctions among intuitions. We can distinguish intuitions by their

⁴⁷Notice also that (IAS), so construed, allows intuitions to depend on past and present perceptual, introspective, and memorial experiences, and inferences in *other* ways. For example, (IAS) is consistent with maintaining that when one intuits *p*, past experiences and one's present memories explain how it is that one *understands p*.

⁴⁸Here, super blindsight is an imaginable scenario where one has all the seemings one would have if one were to have a normal visual experience of one's immediate environment, though one lacks the usual visual imagery that usually attends normal visual experience. However, usual characterizations of the imagined phenomenon do not usually involve such a specified notion of seemings. See Block (1997).

etiology, their modal force, their content, their epistemic worth, and other ways. Nothing about (IAS) prevents this and in the next section I will discuss various distinctions we can draw among intuitions and how (IAS) compares with what others have said about a unique subclass of intuitions: philosophical intuitions.

2.3.2 Extensional Adequacy I: Philosophical Intuitions

In this and the following section I address the issue of (IAS)’s extensional adequacy. For one challenge to (IAS) comes from the idea that intuitions, strictly speaking, are something peculiar to the domain of philosophical inquiry. As I indicated above, I think this is wrong for I think that there are intuitions which, in some sense, are non-philosophical, e.g., possible cases of seemings via super blindsight.⁴⁹ However, I also think there is some sense to the idea that there are uniquely *philosophical intuitions*. Let us begin by characterizing this notion functionally:

Functional Characterization (FC). Something is a *philosophical* intuition just in case it’s an intuition that some philosopher has (or would have) treated as evidence in the construction and evaluation of philosophical theories.

(FC) picks out philosophical intuitions by an *extrinsic* property certain intuitions possess, namely, their (potential) role in philosophical activity. How-

⁴⁹Again, super blindsight is an imaginable scenario where one has all the seemings one would have if one were to have a normal visual experience of one’s immediate environment, though one lacks the usual visual imagery that usually attends normal visual experience.

ever, this way of picking out philosophical intuitions is relatively uninformative. Philosophers have offered different, and less trivial, accounts of what it is to be a philosophical intuition, and in what follows I show how their general views can be situated within the (IAS) account given above.

Many philosophers have claimed that those intuitions appropriate to philosophical theorizing are deeply connected to modality such that one intuit p iff one actually does intuit that p is necessarily true (or would under appropriate circumstances intuit such).⁵⁰ On the (IAS) account we are able to capture this thought with the following condition:

Modal Intuitions. For S 's intuition that p to be a *modal intuition* is for S to intuit that p and also to intuit that p is necessarily true (or else would have such an intuition upon considering whether p is necessarily true).

Another related claim about those intuitions of interest to philosophers is that such intuitions occur *just* in virtue of one's understanding of the concepts involved in the proposition at issue.⁵¹

On the present account, we are able to capture this thought with the following condition:

Conceptual Intuitions. For S 's intuition that p to be a *conceptual*

⁵⁰Bealer (1998, 207), BonJour (1998, 107), Pust (2000, chapter 1), and Sosa (2007, 61). See also Chisholm (1977, 46), Ludwig (2007), and Plantinga (1993, 106).

⁵¹Bealer (1998), BonJour (1998), Ludwig (2007, 135), Peacocke (2000), and Sosa (2007, 60).

intuition is for S to intuit that p solely in virtue of S 's understanding of the concepts involved in p .

Some may wish to define the class of philosophical intuitions in terms of modal and/ or conceptual intuitions, however this proves difficult, owing to the phenomena of deeply contingent intuitions.⁵²

Consider the following examples:

CONTINGENT INTUITIONS

(CI1) If there is a unique most unlikely event e that could occur just after reading this sentence, then e will not occur after reading this sentence.⁵³

(CI2) If I were a ticket holder in just one lottery that was fair, was extremely large, and was to have only one winner, I would be holding a losing ticket.

(CI3) Given evidence E , if H is the best explanation of E , then H is not unlikely to be true.⁵⁴

⁵²Bealer (1999, 50 fn.9) concedes that if there is in fact contingent a priori knowledge, then his account of intuitions would need to be revised to accommodate that possibility in some way or other.

⁵³This example is owed to Turri (2011, 337-340).

⁵⁴This is inspired by Hawthorne's (2002) example which involved claims like the following, which are supposed to be capable of a priori justification: If E_1 is the best explanation of H_1 , then E_1 is true. Turri (2011, 335-337) argues that this is mistaken for we lack (presumably a priori) reason to think best explanations always turn out to be correct. My contention, expressed in (CI3), is that best explanations are, if not true or likely to be true, are at least not unlikely to be true. See my discussion of impure "intuitions" in the next section.

These intuitions appear to be modally strong in the sense that they could not easily have been false, yet for all that they are contingent.⁵⁵ It is easy to see that (CI1) and (CI2) are contingent for it is easy to see that there is some world where their antecedents are true but consequents false. Concerning (CI1), it's the world where there is a unique most unlikely event that occurs after reading (CI1), and concerning (CI2) it's the world where I'm holding the winning ticket in such a lottery. Whether (C3) is contingent may be controversial, but here's a reason to think it contingent. Suppose E is some brute fact and thus is a fact which has no correct explanation. There may yet be some candidate false explanation, H, of E that is better than all other competing explanations of E. But, here, H is unlikely to be true because E's bruteness makes it unexplainable.⁵⁶

Being contingent, (CI1)-(CI3) cannot count as modal intuitions. Might they count as conceptual intuitions? Perhaps, but I find the idea difficult to justify. Firstly, because it is introspectively difficult to tell what the etiology of intuitive seemings are. In general, I think our claims about the etiology of intuitions is more an inference to the best explanation than any sort of

⁵⁵I reject Kripke's (1980, 56) examples of contingent a priori propositions as being cases of intuitions or a priori knowledge. To know *that the length of the standard meter bar is one meter long* one must know that such a bar exists. But such knowledge is neither a priori nor had solely via intuition. I think Kripke's examples are best construed as cases that are partly a priori and partly a posteriori depending on both intuition and some empirical information. BonJour (1998, 12-13) and Turri (2011) defend this view.

⁵⁶Plainly, driving this example home would require precisifications of the target notions of explanation and likelihood. This is an undertaking for another occasion, and is, in any case, unnecessary for present purposes provided I'm correct that (CI1) and (CI2) are contingent intuitions.

immediate apprehension of their origin—except, perhaps, in cases where only stipulative definitions are in play. Secondly, the following principle seems plausible:

(CRN) If a relation R obtains between some concepts $c_1...c_n$, then
 (i) that relation holds necessarily, and (ii) the proposition that that relation holds between $c_1...c_n$ is itself a necessary truth.⁵⁷

(CRN) says that conceptual relations are necessary, but the relations that hold between the concepts present in (C1)-(C3) hold only contingently. So, (CRN), to the extent that it's plausible, poses a significant challenge to the thesis that (C1)-(C3) are grounded solely in our understanding of their constituent concepts.⁵⁸

A further class of intuitions involves the appeal to cases. This class of intuitions is distinguished by the role of reflection on hypothetical situations. For example, the Coinflip Case above is such a possible situation, and reflection on it typically yields the intuition that Dave does not have knowledge.⁵⁹ Other examples will be familiar from philosophical literature, involving Searle's Chinese nation, Thompson's violinist, Putnam's Twin Earth, Lehrer's gypsy lawyers, and Jackson's Mary. We can characterize such intuitions thus:

⁵⁷Ludwig (2007) appears to endorse such a principle.

⁵⁸Though Turri (2011) regards (CI1) (or his slightly different version of it, anyway) as an intuition we have solely on the basis of its conceptual etiology.

⁵⁹There is some debate about the structure of the nature of the content of intuitions had in response to such scenarios. See Ichikawa and Jarvis (2009).

Concrete Case Intuitions. For S to have a *concrete case intuition* that p is for S to intuit p at least partly in virtue of reflection on some hypothetical situation.

Not all modal and conceptual intuitions are concrete case intuitions, for some intuitions are had independently of any considerations having to do with concrete hypothetical scenarios. Moreover, although many concrete case intuitions are conceptual and modal intuitions, some are not. For instance, (CI2) is arguably neither conceptual nor modal, though it is a concrete case intuition.⁶⁰

So what are philosophical intuitions? One thing we can say is that philosophical intuitions *include* modal, conceptual, and concrete case intuitions. It may turn out that these categories are coextensive, but that is a matter I will leave open. Shall we *limit* philosophical intuitions to these categories? I think it clear that these categories capture the vast majority of philosophical intuitions. However, the contingent intuitions (CI1)-(CI3) should give us pause. For these are clearly not modal, nor are (CI1) or (CI3) concrete case intuitions, and, as noted above, it's unclear whether any of these are conceptual intuitions. Accordingly, I will also leave it open whether all philosophical intuitions are either modal, or conceptual, or concrete case intuitions. Thus, in the end, I'm not sure we can do much better than (FC) with respect to providing necessary and sufficient conditions for the category of philosoph-

⁶⁰It is a concrete case intuition because one cannot even consider it without considering the hypothetical scenario described in its antecedent.

ical intuitions. Though we can helpfully add to (FC) the observation that most, though not all, philosophical intuitions are either modal, conceptual, or concrete case intuitions.

2.3.3 Extensional Adequacy II: Impure “Intuitions” and Cornerstones

Here I wish to parry another potential objection to (IAS)’s extensional adequacy. Roughly, the problem is that philosophers can be quite liberal with their use of the term ‘intuition’ and thus there are things that are sometimes referred to as intuitions but which fail to satisfy (IAS). The goal of this section is to help explain why some might be inclined to regard certain non-intuitions, according to (IAS), as genuine intuitions.

Here are some examples of (possible) seemings that would not count as intuitions according to (IAS), but nevertheless have some claim to the name “intuition”:

IMPURE “INTUITIONS”

(Upon seeing my own hands in normal circumstances and considering whether (IPI1) was true, it would seem true that) (IPI1) I have justification to believe that I have hands.

(Upon witnessing someone break a promise solely for one’s personal convenience and considering whether (IPI2) was true, it would seem true that) (IPI2) That person did something wrong.

(Upon seeing the standard meter bar (and recognizing it as such) in normal circumstances and considering whether (IPI3) was true, it would seem true that) (IPI3) The length of that bar is one meter long.

(IPI1)-(IPI3) would each seem true in the specified cases, but according to (IAS) none of these count as intuitions because each of them depends on some CEE, i.e., on some conscious perceptual or introspective experience or memories as of such past experiences, or inferences therefrom. Yet the fact that each of these seem true does not depend *solely* on some CEE. Rather, each partly depends on an intuition one has (or at least would have if one were to consider the matter). (IPI1)'s seeming true depends on one's intuitions about those conditions sufficient for having a justified belief; (IPI2)'s seeming true depends on one's intuitions about the moral acceptability of promise breaking for personal convenience; (IPI3)'s seeming true depends on one's intuitions about how stipulative definitions function. We may characterize such impure "intuitions" thus:

Impure "Intuitions". For S to have an *impure "intuition"* that p is for p to seem true to S partly in virtue of intuitions one has (or would have) and partly in virtue of some CEE.

A further class of putative "intuitions" are propositions Wittgenstein has referred to as "hinge-propositions" and Wright had dubbed "cornerstone propo-

sitions.”⁶¹ Often, these are propositions which reside at the core of our web of belief and, often, do not admit of evidential support.⁶² Here are some examples:

CORNERSTONES

(Corn1) The world will not be instantaneously annihilated in the next five minutes and then immediately recreated so as to exactly resemble its pre-annihilated state.

(Corn2) The human bodies that I usually encounter in the actual world enjoy genuine mental states.

(Corn3) I’m not presently dreaming or the subject of the deceptions of an evil-demon.

(Corn4) My cognitive faculties are reliable.

Some might worry that these cornerstone propositions are not seemings in the target sense because, when one reflects on these claims, they lack the sort of phenomenology that is characteristic of seemings.^{63,64} Why, then, might some be inclined to think such cornerstones are intuitions? One reason is the existing tendency to deploy the term ‘intuition’ quite liberally. But a

⁶¹Wright (2004); Wittgenstein (1969).

⁶²At least non-circular evidential support.

⁶³This is my experience when I reflect on (Corn1)-(Corn4). It is not as though I can tell, just by reflecting on them, that they are true. Nevertheless, I do believe them, and quite strongly at that.

⁶⁴Though some cornerstones may be seemings. For example, consider: (Corn5) There are material objects. In my view this is not simply a deeply rooted belief, but a claim that seems true when one has a normal visual experience and considers whether (Corn5) is true.

further, and much more interesting, reason people may be inclined to regard such cornerstones as intuitions is because we have certain impure “intuitions” with respect to (Corn1)-(Corn4). Namely, we have the impure “intuition” that our belief in these propositions is epistemically justified. That is, what seems true are the following:

(ECorn1) I am justified in believing that the world will not be instantaneously annihilated in the next five minutes and then immediately recreated so as to exactly resemble its pre-annihilated state.

(ECorn2) I am justified in believing that the human bodies that I usually encounter in the actual world enjoy genuine mental states.

(ECorn3) I am justified in believing that I’m not presently dreaming or the subject of the deceptions of an evil-demon.

(ECorn4) I am justified in believing that my cognitive faculties are reliable.

The reason these do not count as intuitions is that they depend on some CEE, specifically, one’s introspective awareness that one believes (Corn1)-(Corn4). But they do count as impure “intuitions” because they also depend on intuitions one has (or would have) about the epistemic acceptability of forming a belief in (Corn1)-(Corn4) in circumstances such as those one is presently in. Namely, I think those who share the impure “intuitions” (ECorn1)-(ECorn4) do so, in part, because they have (would have) the following concrete case

intuition:

(Y) If anyone were in circumstances such as I am in and also believed (Corn1)-(Corn4) as I do, then they would justifiedly believe (Corn1)-(Corn4).⁶⁵

So there is something quite plausible to be said on behalf of the (IAS) theorist in response to those who may be inclined to (mistakenly) label impure “intuitions” and cornerstones as intuitions.

2.3.4 Qualitative Adequacy

In section 2.1 we said that any account of the nature of intuition must be qualitatively adequate. In this regard it is a mark in favor of (IAS) that paradigmatic cases of intuitions share not only properties (P1)-(P5) with seemings, but intuitions also share certain other properties that are characteristic of seemings, namely:

SHARED PRINCIPAL PROPERTIES

Fallibility. Seemings and intuitions can have false contents.

Scalarity. Seemings and intuitions come in degrees.

Stability. Seemings and intuitions are contextually stable; if it seems to you that p in circumstances C , then in relevantly similar circumstances it will also seem to you that p .

⁶⁵I take this to be a concrete case intuition for the same reason I take (CI2) to be: understanding the antecedent requires reflection on a hypothetical situation, which in turn will yield the intuition that (Y) is true.

Source-opacity. Both intuitions and the sort of seemings indicated by (IAS) lack an obvious phenomenal etiology.⁶⁶

The remainder of this section elaborates on these shared properties.

Fallibility. Fallibility is uncontroversial. Intuitions and seemings have propositional contents that can be false. It is wildly implausible to think that every seeming and intuition must be true; the very fact that people have inconsistent intuitions and seemings is evidence of their fallibility.

Scalarity. Scalarity tells us that seemings and intuitions are degreed, i.e., there is an introspectively detectable sense in which some seemings are stronger than others. I weakly but distinctly recall that my office is fewer than five feet from the departmental book display, and so it seems true to me that my office is fewer than five feet from the departmental book display. But something changes when I measure the distance between my office and the book display. The proposition in question continues to seem true, but the seeming has increased in strength in a way that's hard to articulate. Nonetheless, the change in strength will manifest in both belief and behavior: upon measuring I become more confident that my office is fewer than five feet from the display, I'm less likely to regard past disconfirming evidence (suppose someone down the hall told me that it is exactly six feet from the display), and I'm more likely to engage in behaviors that manifest my confidence that there is not much room between my office and the book

⁶⁶The term 'source-opacity' is borrowed from Lynch (2006), though it has a slightly different use there.

display (I would advise others to refrain from attempting to put a large couch between them). The same is true of intuitions. Some intuitions are stronger than others: the intuition that what is necessarily the case is the case is stronger than the intuition that what is possible is necessarily possible; my intuition that parthood is transitive is stronger than my intuition that it is reflexive.⁶⁷

Stability. That seemings and intuitions are contextually stable is another seemingly obvious truth about seemings. If upon having a visual experience as of some birds soaring over the department and it seems to me that there are birds soaring, then, other things being equal, on any other occasion where I have that same sort of visual experience it will likewise seem true to me that birds are soaring. The ‘other things being equal’ clause has the unfortunate effect of trivializing the given statement, but this does not prevent it from expressing an informative truth. For it calls to our attention the fact that seemings are not, typically, random occurrences. This is also true of intuitions: our intuitions are characteristically stable: in general, what we find intuitive remains so. Consider the naive comprehension axiom for sets; it is highly intuitive despite the fact that we know it to be self-contradictory. For comparison consider belief. No matter what things seem true, we need not

⁶⁷As Williamson (2007, 236) notes: “on any reasonable view, intuitions vary in strength. An adequately fine-grained theory of intuitions would have to distinguish weaker ones from stronger ones in (epistemological) impact.” See also Bealer (1998, 208) and Pust (2000, chapter 2). Also, any who maintain that intuitions are beliefs or are inclinations (attractions) to believe will find this plausible also, for it is widely thought that belief, in some sense, comes in degrees; it is also likely that inclinations do too for there is an introspectively clear sense in which some inclinations are stronger than others.

have any corresponding belief. Belief is subject to manipulation by factors that seemings are typically resilient to: intimidation, cajoling, countervailing authorities.⁶⁸ Upon having a visual experience as of a bird, it seems true that there is a bird no matter what I might be brought to believe (e.g., that it is a cleverly crafted piece of wood). Or take the claim that the even numbers are fewer than the natural numbers: it persists in seeming true though we believe it to be false.

Source-opacity. I assume that one is always caused to be in whatever conscious state they happen to be in; conscious states are not uncaused. Sometimes it is quite easy to become aware upon reflection on one's own mental life what has (proximately) caused one to be in a particular conscious state. For instance, an auditory experience as of a barking dog can cause me to believe that there is a dog barking not far from me. If asked why I have that belief, upon reflection it is obvious that the belief is caused by the auditory experience. But sometimes it is not easy to discern just what has caused one to be in a certain conscious state. For example, you might distrust someone but be very uncertain as to why it is you distrust them even after careful reflection. The idea of source-opacity is grounded in the observation that paradigmatic cases of intuition are ones where there is no obvious conscious experience doing the work that, say, sense and memorial experience do for propositions about our immediate environment or our per-

⁶⁸Bealer (1998, 208).

sonal history.⁶⁹ This condition does not rule out that there might be some sort of phenomenal etiology that is accessible upon reflection; only that if there is one, it is at best opaque. What sorts of seemings have a non-opaque etiology? Those that clearly derive from sensory, memorial, introspective, and inferences. And since the sort of seemings (IAS) claims to be intuitions are just those that have this opaque etiology, such seemings and intuitions have this further property of source-opacity in common. Notice that the point here is contingent: there might be other possible worlds where we have much better epistemic access to our own mental lives such that the causes of any given mental state is always something we can easily become aware of.

⁶⁹Grundmann (2007, 69-70) notes that we only call something an intuition if we do not know its source. According to Lynch (2006), one only intuits that p if one's intuiting "does not knowably derive from memory, perception, inference or any of the usual sources of evidence."

3 The Epistemology of Seemings I: Exposition

In the next three chapters I explain and defend a general epistemological thesis about seemings: namely, that seemings are a defeasible source of non-inferential justification. I call this position ‘Liberalism’.⁷⁰ If Liberalism is correct, and if intuitions are seemings, then it follows that intuitions are also a defeasible source of non-inferential justification. I call this position ‘Rationalism’.⁷¹

Liberalism and Rationalism are extremely modest epistemic theses, being consistent with a very wide variety of epistemological positions. Although consistency with other theses is not necessarily a reason to endorse Liberalism or Rationalism, it does prevent the view from being subject to certain sorts of objections. The remainder of this chapter further clarifies just what Liberalism, and by extension, Rationalism are, and what salient issues they are neutral on.

3.1 Liberalism, Rationalism, Conservatism

In normal circumstances, if you were to see a bird perched on a tree branch just outside your office window, several propositions, at least upon reflection, would *seem* true: that there is a bird near your office, that you’re not very far from at least one bird, that at least one bird still lives, that many other birds

⁷⁰My use of the terms ‘Liberalism’ and ‘Conservatism’ follow Silin’s (2007) usage.

⁷¹My use of the term ‘Rationalism’ follows, roughly, the use of Bonjour (1998), Bealer (1998), and Peacocke (2000).

could simultaneously be perched on the same tree, that the tree outweighs the bird, that that bird is not identical to anything that is not a bird, and so forth. You might also believe each of these claims, but, then again, you might not. Suppose a friend standing nearby with binoculars said the bird was a well crafted and expertly painted piece of wood. You might therefore suspend belief, but the propositions would still seem true.

In the previous chapter I argued for a particular thesis about the nature of seemings, I argued that they are a *sui generis* representational propositional attitude with a unique phenomenology. However, as it concerns the epistemology of seemings there is room for disagreement about the nature of seemings. One can maintain that seemings are reducible to some other sort of contentful mental state and still maintain that they have some important epistemic role in our intellectual lives. Nevertheless, in what follows I will be taking for granted the conclusions of the previous chapter on the nature of seemings and their relation to other contentful mental states in the neighborhood.

Turning, then, from metaphysical to epistemological questions about seemings, let's distinguish two questions:

(Q1) If it seems to one that p , does that experience bring about justification to believe p ?

(Q2) If so, in virtue of what do seemings generate justification?

In response to (Q1) there are many answers one could adopt. Here's a familiar

option:

Conservatism. Provided one lacks defeaters for p , if it seems to one that p and one has collateral information ϕ , then one thereby has justification to believe p ; and if one lacked collateral information ϕ , its seeming to be the case that p would not give one justification to believe p .⁷²

According to Conservatism, seemings are not themselves able to provide one with justification; rather it's seemings *plus* one's collateral information that have this ability. I leave it to Conservatives to say just what that information must be, as well as the manner in which one must possess that information.⁷³

⁷²Throughout when I speak of "having justification to believe p " (= propositional justification) I always mean "having *ultima facie* justification to believe p ", where one has *ultima facie* justification to believe p iff one has *undefeated prima facie* justification to believe p . To have *prima facie* justification to believe p is to have a *degree* of justification strong enough to merit belief in p from the epistemic point of view. (See Alston (1989, 7), Pollock and Cruz (1999, 32), and Senor (1996).) A *defeater* for a proposition p is any mental state one is in (e.g., a belief or experience or combination thereof) that prevents one from having *ultima facie* justification to believe p . (This is roughly Pollock and Cruz's (1999, 195) definition; cp. Bergmann (2005) who defines defeaters in terms of justified belief (= doxastic justification) rather than propositional justification.) Also, one *lacks* defeaters for p iff one either has no defeater for p or one has only defeated defeaters for p .

⁷³Candidates for ϕ include the claim that seemings are reliable, that seemings are a source of justification, that certain skeptical alternative fail to obtain, or, perhaps, that seemings are pragmatically necessary for achieving some epistemic goal. Conservatives may differ on the manner in which one must be related to ϕ , and options include: belief in ϕ , having justification to believe ϕ , justifiedly believing ϕ , knowing ϕ , or having some kind of pragmatic entitlement to accept ϕ . Views *akin* to Conservatism have been endorsed by Cohen (2002), White (2006), and Wright (2004). (Their views are "akin" to what I'm calling "Conservatism" because their primary concern is with perceptual justification and not explicitly with seemings, and they have only asserted that perceptual justification *depends* on such collateral information without specifying exactly *how* it depends on such collateral information—though certain non-conservatives have attributed to conservatives the idea that the dependence relation is roughly as indicated by the principle above, e.g., see Silins (2007) and Neta (2010).)

Another view with respect to (Q1) is the following:

Weak Liberalism. Provided one lacks defeaters, if it seems to S that p , then S thereby has only some small degree of justification for believing that p . If S has more than a small degree of justification for p , it is because S has some source of justification for p other than a seeming.

Weak Liberalism is the view that seemings by themselves afford us some degree of justification but never enough to justify a belief. As stated, Weak Liberalism is consistent with Conservatism, but it is also consistent with its denial.

But here's another answer to (Q1) some have preferred:

Liberalism. Provided one lacks defeaters for p , if it seems to one that p , then one thereby has justification to believe p .⁷⁴

Liberalism is the view that seemings themselves are a defeasible source of non-inferential justification, and Liberalism's distinction lies with its bold stance on one familiar issue: it implies that the ability of seemings to bring about justification is, in some sense, *independent of* one's justification to believe seemings reliable or on one's having any other collateral information to the effect that seemings have positive epistemic value. This bold stance makes

⁷⁴Huemer (2001), (2006), and (2007), and Tucker (2010) defend roughly the same position as I defend here. Pryor (2000) and (2004), Pollock and Cruz (1999), and Pollock and Oved (2005) defend Liberal positions with respect to perceptual seemings. Chudnoff (2010) holds it with respect to intuitive and perceptual seemings. See also Swinburne (1998, 20) and Conee in Feldman and Conee (2004, 15).

Liberalism vulnerable to Cohen's easy knowledge and incoherence objections. I will explain and address these objections in chapter 5.

Liberalism tells us that seemings are a defeasible source of non-inferential justification. If correct, and if, as I have argued, intuitions are seemings, it follows that:

Rationalism. Provided one lacks defeaters for p , if one intuitively that p , then one thereby has justification to believe p .

Rationalism can then explain and justify the correctness of the epistemic practice of taking (undefeated) intuitions as evidence. To defend Rationalism, then, I will be defending Liberalism. The remainder of this chapter clarifies various other, important epistemological issues that Liberalism (and Rationalism) are neutral about. The next chapter, chapter 4, provides arguments for Liberalism while chapter 5 provides responds to various arguments against Liberalism.

3.2 Liberalism's Theoretical Modesty

It is a significant feature of Liberalism, one often overlooked, that it leaves several controversial epistemological matters open. As we will see this neutrality is significant because it allows Liberalism to either dodge certain objections altogether or allows people to endorse Liberalism without having to endorse certain other, objectionable views some have thought implied by Liberalism.

First, and in response to (Q2), Liberalism is silent on the matter of *why* seemings have this ability to bring about justification. Thus, for example, Liberalism is consistent with each of the following theses:

Brutalism. Liberalism is a brute fact, there is no explanation for its correctness.⁷⁵

Phenomenalism. Liberalism is true because of the phenomenology of seemings.⁷⁶

Really Impure Coherentism. Liberalism is true because seemings typically cohere with one's set of beliefs, or some relevant subset of them.⁷⁷

Pragmatism. Liberalism is true because treating seemings as evidence for their contents is the only way we can achieve goal ϕ .

Reliabilism. Liberalism is true because seemings are reliable.⁷⁸

Perspectival Reliabilism. Liberalism is true because we have justification to believe seemings are reliable.⁷⁹

⁷⁵Price (1950) and Chisholm (1989) appear to have held a view somewhat like this. Cf. Steup (2004, 409).

⁷⁶Pryor (2000) and Chudnoff (2010) endorse this view for at least some seemings.

⁷⁷*Pure* coherentism is the view that coherence is the only property that makes a set of beliefs justified; *impure* coherentism allows for some things other than coherence (e.g., perceptual experiences) to bring about *some* justification but not enough to justify a belief; Liberalism cum *really impure coherentism* implies a weak version of foundationalism that shares with pure coherentism the idea that facts about justification ultimately depend on facts about coherence.

⁷⁸This is one of many possible externalist explanations. Others include explanations that appeal to some kind of subjunctive condition (safety, sensitivity) or proper function. Bergmann (MS) defends the compatibility of Liberalism with externalist theories of justification.

⁷⁹In my paper "How To Be Conservative: A Partial Defense of Epistemic Conservatism"

To further clarify the relationship these explanations bear to Liberalism it will help to focus on the difference between Conservatism and Perspectival Reliabilism. Although the two views may appear the same, they are distinct because they say different things about *what* brings about justification. Conservatism says that seemings *plus one's relation to some additional information* bring about justification, whereas Perspectival Reliabilism says that seemings *themselves* bring about justification. Put differently, both views agree that when one has justification for p which *depends on* a seeming that p , then that justification depends also on one's collateral information; however, these views disagree about the *manner* in which that justification for p depends on one's collateral information.

We can explicate this difference in terms of the epistemic basing relation which requires one to base their belief in p on a *ground* (or *reason*) which affords one justification to believe p (= a *justifying* ground). When p seems true, Conservatism says one's additional information is a *partial* justifying ground to believe p , whereas Perspectival Reliabilism gives one's additional information an *ancillary* role of making that seeming a *complete* justifying ground to believe p . Since having a justified belief requires one to base that belief on a justifying ground, Conservatism entails that a seeming cannot justify a belief unless that belief is based on the seeming as well as one's collateral information; Perspectival Reliabilism allows one's belief to be justified

the view I call "Metaphysical Conservatism" is a version of Perspectival Reliabilism with respect to perceptual experiences rather than seemings.

by being based only on the seeming. Since few epistemic agents always base their justified beliefs on such collateral information, some have regarded this entailment of views like Conservatism a strong reason to reject them.⁸⁰ Those who endorse views according to which justification via a source “depends on” certain collateral information have not been very clear as to whether they have intended to be endorsing a version of Conservatism or Liberalism cum some perspectival explanation.⁸¹

Notice that Liberals may also adopt a bifurcated explanation of why seemings have epistemic power, claiming that some seemings have justificatory power in virtue of their phenomenology, while the remaining kinds of seemings have justificatory power because they are reliable, or one has justification to believe they are, or whatever. So options are available, and endorsing Liberalism leaves these broader explanatory matters up for debate.

In what follows I will neither defend nor presuppose any particular answer to (Q2). I regard answering (Q2) as primarily an in-house debate for Liberals, and my aim in this chapter is to persuade others of the correctness of Liberalism however (Q2) happens to be best answered.⁸²

The *second* issue on which Liberalism is neutral concerns Moore’s strategy for responding to skepticism. For Liberalism is neutral concerning the contested issue as to whether or not its seeming to one that *p* has the power

⁸⁰See Silins (2007, 118); compare Huemer’s (2007) self-defeat argument.

⁸¹E.g., see Cohen (2002), White (2006), and Wright (2004).

⁸²Notice that Liberalism is not stated as a necessary truth, this is important especially in the absence of an answer to (Q2). For some ways of answering (Q2), e.g., Reliabilism, will entail that Liberalism is only a contingent truth.

not only to justify one in believing p but also has the power to justify one in rejecting various skeptical alternatives one knows or justifiedly believes to be incompatible with p . For instance, a Liberal can maintain that although it's seeming to one that *the wall is red* justifies one in believing that *the wall is red*, that seeming cannot by itself justify one in believing the obvious entailment that *the wall is not a redly lit white wall*. Here's another way to make the point: because Liberalism, as construed here, is a thesis about *seemings* bringing about *non-inferential* or *immediate* justification it implies nothing with regard to the conditions that must be satisfied for an *inference* to bring about *inferential* justification.⁸³ Accordingly, Liberalism is not susceptible to Cohen's easy knowledge via closure objection.⁸⁴

Third, Liberalism only stipulates a sufficient condition for justification, thus leaving it open that there are sources of justification other than seemings. So Liberalism does not automatically limit the ways in which one can come by justification. Thus, for example, Liberalism is consistent with the idea that direct acquaintance and reliable causation are sufficient to bring about justification apart from any seeming.

Fourth, Liberalism entails only a weak form of foundationalism, one that claims that there are *some* propositions we have justification to believe whose

⁸³Silins (2007) discusses and defends this option for Liberals about perceptual justification at length. Sosa (2009, 219-221) also endorses such a view. See them also for a defense of the compatibility of closure principles with this option.

⁸⁴Cohen (2002). Nor is Liberalism susceptible to Cohen's easy knowledge via bootstrapping objection, for Liberals can maintain that bootstrapping arguments are, for some reason, unable to *transmit* justification (see Vogel (2008) and Weisberg (2010)).

justification does not arise from their relations to other propositions we believe. Thus, Liberalism is consistent with maintaining that there are, nevertheless, *some* propositions we have justification to believe whose justification is ultimately derived *only* from their relations to other propositions we believe. Even more, because Liberalism is only a thesis about *justification* it is consistent with some anti-foundationalist theories of *knowledge*.⁸⁵

Finally, Liberalism is consistent with the view that seemings in various domains fail to bring about justification. For if there were good reason to think that there is some domain about which seemings are not sufficiently reliable to merit belief, then one would have a defeater for all seemings of that domain, thereby nullifying the ability of seemings to justify claims in that domain. But that does not contradict Liberalism, it only implies that one of the necessary conditions for a seeming to bring about justification has not been met. Thus one can be a Liberal and not only resist the idea that every sort of seeming brings about justification but even maintain that *most* seemings fail to bring about justification.

The upshot of these considerations is that Liberalism turns out to be a rather modest epistemic position, one that is consistent with many diverse epistemological theses.

⁸⁵Accordingly, adopting Liberalism can help coherentists about knowledge deflect the familiar basing objection. For expression of this objection see Pollock and Cruz (1999, 79-80).

4 The Epistemology of Seemings II: Defense

Now, I have defended neither Liberalism nor Rationalism. I have simply explained the views and their relevant commitments (or lack thereof). In what follows I offer a defense of both views. Michael Huemer has argued that we base all of our belief on seemings, and thus we cannot rationally reject the idea that seemings are a source of justification. I begin my defense of Liberalism in section 4.1 by presenting Huemer's argument in greater detail and showing how it can be used to support Liberalism with the help of an anti-skeptical assumption. Section 4.2 discusses problems for Huemer's argument while section 4.3 shows how a revised version of Huemer's argument for Liberalism can survive these objections. Section 4.4 discusses how this revised argument for Liberalism is likewise an argument for Rationalism.

4.1 Huemer's Self-Defeat Argument

Liberalism's modesty is a pleasant feature of the view, but what reason do we have to think Liberalism true? Here I think we can do little better than turning to Huemer's self-defeat argument for the view that seemings are a defeasible source of justification. In this section I show how Huemer's argument supports Liberalism, and in the next sections I offer objections to his argument and then produce a revised version of his argument that can resist those objections.

Huemer advocates the following principle about seemings which he calls

“Phenomenal Conservatism”:

If it seems to *S* that *p*, then, in the absence of defeaters, *S* thereby has *at least some degree* of justification for believing that *p*.⁸⁶

Because it’s consistent with Phenomenal Conservatism that undefeated seemings give us just a bit of justification but never enough to make a belief justified, the difference between Phenomenal Conservatism and Liberalism is that Phenomenal Conservatism does not imply that undefeated seemings ever yield enough justification to bring about a *justified belief*—something that Huemer quite clearly wishes to affirm. Liberalism avoids this problem, and for ease of exposition in what follows I treat Huemer’s arguments as though they were marshaled in defense of Liberalism.

Now, Huemer has offered the following argument against views that reject the justificatory power of seemings:

THE SELF-DEFEAT ARGUMENT

(H1) All our beliefs (in relevant cases) are based upon seemings.⁸⁷

(H2) A belief is justified only if it is based on a justifying ground.

Therefore,

(H3) If it’s seeming to be the case that *p* is not a justifying ground for *p*, then all our beliefs are unjustified, including the belief (if

⁸⁶Huemer (2007, 30).

⁸⁷Huemer (2007, 39) says that the relevant cases which are exceptions to this involve self-deception and leaps of faith which are cases where beliefs are formed in response to one’s desires rather than how things seem.

one has it) that Liberalism is false.⁸⁸

The basing relation referred to in (H1) and (H2) is the relation that obtains between one's belief and one's *grounds* for believing what one does (= the *reason for which* one holds that belief). For example, when one has a visual experience as of a cat and on those grounds (= for that reason) forms the belief that there is a cat nearby, one's belief is said to *based on* one's visual experience.

Together (H1) and (H2) entail (H3). Huemer takes (H1) to be a more or less introspectively obvious empirical truth, and he takes (H2) to follow from the familiar and rarely disputed view that a justified belief that *p* must be based on a *justifying ground* for *p*, i.e., a ground or reason that gives one justification to believe *p*. We'll discuss both premises shortly, but first I want to show how we can get an argument for Liberalism out of (H3).

According to Huemer, "the argument here is not directly an argument that (Liberalism) is true, but rather that epistemological theories that oppose (Liberalism) are self-defeating."⁸⁹ Nevertheless, the inevitable force of his argument is apparent: the opponent of Liberalism finds himself in the following dilemma:

(H4) Either (a) Liberalism is true and we thereby avoid a problematic form of skepticism, or else (b) Liberalism is false and,

⁸⁸Huemer (2011, 1) and (2007, 39-42). Huemer's (2011, 1) formulation of (H2) is equivalent: "a belief is (doxastically) justified only if what it is based upon constitutes an adequate source of (propositional) justification."

⁸⁹Huemer (2007, 41); cf. Huemer (2011).

therefore, a problematic form of skepticism is true, indeed, a form that precludes us from even being able to justifiedly reject the view that Liberalism is false.

Given (H1), the problematic form of skepticism indicated by the denial of Liberalism is the view that we lack justified beliefs, and hence knowledge, entirely. Thus, since it's more reasonable for us to endorse a view that implies that we know/justifiedly believe many of the things we think we do rather than endorse global skepticism about knowledge/justified belief, it is more reasonable for us to endorse (a) than (b). Thus, we seem forced to accept Liberalism. Specifically, we get from (H4) all the way to Liberalism by maintaining some kind of opposition to skepticism, e.g.:

(H5) The problematic form of skepticism implicated by the rejection of Liberalism is false.

(H5) is a vague form of a familiar anti-skeptical assumption presupposed by epistemologists wanting to table that issue. I too will be taking it for granted that we know/justifiedly believe much of what we think we do. (Those who do not endorse this (skeptics of some sort or other) can construe the arguments offered on behalf of Liberalism as conditional on the correctness of this assumption.)

Together (H4) and (H5) imply:

(H6) Liberalism is true.

Thus, from an anti-skeptical assumption ((H5)), the basing requirement ((H2)), and the claim that we actually base all our beliefs on seemings ((H1)), one can marshal a significant argument in favor of Liberalism.

4.2 Assessment of Huemer's Argument

In my view Huemer's argument has homed in on something important, something that, in the end, gives us a strong reason to endorse Liberalism. Though, as it stands, this reason is in need of some refinement and clarification. But let's begin with something that need not be refined: (H2).

(H2) makes a familiar and widely acknowledged point about the relationship between propositional and doxastic justification. Intuitively, one can believe p , have *ultima facie* justification to believe p (= propositional justification), and yet fail to justifiedly believe p (= doxastic justification). This sort of case occurs when one's belief in p fails to be epistemically based on that which brings it about that one has justification to believe it (= a justifying ground).⁹⁰ When there is no such failure, one has a justified belief.⁹¹

⁹⁰If one has (*ultima facie*) justification to believe p , there are two kinds of factors responsible for it. The first kind of factor is *positive*, involving the presence of certain features of one's situation that *make it the case* or *bring it about* that one has *prima facie* justification to believe p (e.g., certain sorts of experiences). Such positive factors I call justifying grounds or reasons. The second sort of factor is *negative*, involving the *absence* of certain features that would prevent one's *prima facie* justification provided by one's justifying ground from rising to the level of *ultima facie* justification (e.g., defeaters). As it concerns these two types of factors and the basing relation, I make the standard assumption that to have a justified belief one need only base that belief on those positive factors, i.e., one's justifying grounds.

⁹¹For expression and endorsements of the distinction between propositional and doxastic justification see Feldman (2002, 46), Korcz (2000, 525-526), Kvanvig (2003, section B1), Pollock and Cruz (1999, 35-36), Pryor (2000), Silins (2005), Swain (1979, 25), and Turri

Although there is considerable debate about exact nature of the epistemic basing relation, none seem to challenge this theory neutral way of drawing the distinction between propositional and doxastic justification. Thus (H2) seems sound.

(H1) is a different story. As others have noticed, Huemer needs a stronger premise than (H1) to reach his conclusion, (H3). For it's not enough that all our beliefs be based on seemings, they need to be based *solely* on seemings. For (H1) allows that all our beliefs have multiple bases, and that it's the bases which are *not* seemings that afford us justification, in which case no skeptical problem follows.⁹²

This is not a mere hypothetical worry, for if, as argued above, seemings are distinct from perceptual, memorial, and introspective experiences then it will be arguable that those experiences are themselves defeasible sources of justification and that many of our beliefs are based on those experiences and not, or at least not entirely, on the seemings that are related to those experiences. Notice that this worry remains irrespective of the exact relationship between seemings and these other sorts of experiences. For example, a perceptual seeming that *p might* simply be a seeming that is *caused* by a perceptual experience with content *p*. In which case, one might base their belief in *p* on the perceptual experience rather than the seeming. Alternatively, a perceptual seeming that *p might* simply be a seeming that is a *constitutive* (2010).

⁹²For related opposition to (H1) see DePoe (2011) and Hasan (forthcoming).

part of one's perceptual experience with content p . Either way, the seeming will not be identical to the perceptual experience and so one can maintain, in opposition to (H1), that seemings are not always themselves the bases of our beliefs nor are they always the source of our justification.⁹³

But for Huemer to make his argument, *all* our beliefs must be based on seemings alone.

4.3 Reviving Huemer's Argument

I do not know if the considerations against (H1) are conclusive. Fortunately, the case for Liberalism rests on nothing so strong as (H1). For even though it's difficult to make the case that *all* our beliefs are based solely on seemings, it's quite plausible to think that *many* of our beliefs are based solely on seemings. As it turns out, this is enough to forge an argument on behalf of Liberalism. The improved Huemerean argument for Liberalism is this:

THE ABDUCTIVE ARGUMENT

(A1) We justifiedly believe, and perhaps know, many of the things
we think we do, e.g., we justifiedly believe many things about

⁹³There are other possible examples where a belief is based on something other than a seeming. For instance, one may believe p on the basis of a very long argument involving complex reasoning even though p seems neither true nor false (perhaps because of the complexity of the argument or because of the complexity of the conclusion itself). For another example, it is far from clear that our many merely dispositional beliefs, i.e., beliefs we have but have never occurrently considered, are based on any seemings. Lastly, it is unclear that testimonial beliefs are based on seemings, for one's testimony that p does not typically make p seem true. True, our awareness of testimony may depend on perceptual seemings, but our belief in what is testified is, arguably, not (properly) based on perceptual seemings alone.

ourselves, about others, about our immediate environment, about philosophical matters, etc.

(A2) Very many of these justified beliefs either (i) actually are based solely on seemings or (ii) they could have been based solely on seemings and remained justified beliefs.

(A3) Liberalism not only *can* explain (A2), but it is also the *best* explanation of (A2).

Therefore,

(A4) Liberalism is true.

(A1) is just the familiar anti-skeptical premise. Those skeptical of this may regard the argument as conditional on the truth of (A1). In what follows I offer defense of (A2) and (A3).

In Defense of (A2)

Notice first that (A2) is going to be much more difficult to refute than (H1). For (A2), unlike (H1), does not make the overly ambitious claim that *all* or even *most* of our justified beliefs are based solely on seemings. Thus the mere fact that we might have many justified beliefs that fail to be based on any seeming will not be enough to refute (A2).

But what reason have we to think (A2) true? *First*, in support of (A2)(i), notice that there are certain domains of justified beliefs which seem to be based on nothing other than seemings. For example, we have many justi-

fied beliefs about what we would do, or believe, or think, or feel in certain counterfactual circumstances, e.g., I justifiedly believe that:

- (a) If a Harvard scientist were to tell me that a team of researchers just discovered a previously unknown property of zinc and I had no reason to think he was lying to me, I would believe him.

But such beliefs appear to be based on nothing other than the counterfactual proposition seeming true.

Similarly, when it comes to philosophical matters, our reliance on intuition for belief seems to be nothing other than a reliance on certain propositions seeming to be true.⁹⁴ For example:

- (b) If p is true, then p is true.

Here I believe (b) but on no other grounds than the fact that it seems to be the case.

Consider also some beliefs you have about your past which do not depend on any kind of quasi-perceptual memorial experience. For example, you may recall that:

- (c) At some time prior to this moment you learned that the German word ‘schnee’ refers to snow.

Here one’s belief in (c) appears to be based solely on its seeming to be the case that (c)—at least for those of us who do not who don’t have any kind of

⁹⁴Many regard intuitions as simply a kind of seeming. See Bealer (1998), Chudnoff (2010), Pust (2000), and Sosa (2007).

quasi-perceptual memorial experience as of learning that the German word ‘schnee’ refers to snow. These are but a few examples, and it should be of note that those who have challenged Huemer’s (H1) have not called (A2)(i) into question.⁹⁵

Second, in support of (A2)(ii), notice that even in those cases where our justified beliefs are at best only partly based on seemings, intuitively many of them *would* have been justified had they been based solely on the relevant seeming. Consider the relationship between perceptual experiences and some perceptual seemings. For example, suppose you were reading a printed version of this paper in an isolated environment (e.g., the middle of some desert). In such a circumstance it would seem true to you *and* you would believe, at least upon consideration, that:

(N) There is, but there might not have been, English text nearby.

Consider now what basing relations might obtain between the following three states:

(PET) One’s perceptual experience as of English text.

(SEN) Its seeming true to one that (N).

(BEN) One’s belief in (N).

Here are the possible basing relations:

⁹⁵For opponent’s of Huemer’s self-defeat argument for Phenomenal Conservatism who nevertheless do *not* challenge this weaker claim, see DePaul (2009), DePoe (2011), Littlejohn (2011), and Hasan (forthcoming).

(#1) (BEN) is based solely on (PET).

(#2) (BEN) is based solely on (SEN).

(#3) (BEN) is based partly on (PET) and partly on (SEN).

(#4) (BEN) is based on (PET) and (BEN) is based on (SEN).

(overdetermination)

(#5) (BEN) is based on (PET) and only partly on (SEN). (partial overdetermination)

(#6) (BEN) is based on (SEN) and only partly on (PET). (partial overdetermination)

Here's the crucial question:

Which relations are *sufficient* for one to have a justified belief in (N)?

All that is needed to support (A2)(ii) is the claim that relation (#2) is sufficient for one to have a justified belief in (N). It doesn't matter what relation actually obtains so long as it's possible for (#2) to obtain and for that to be sufficient for one to justifiedly believe (N). Thus even if one were to argue that some basing relation other than (#2) would obtain in the specified circumstances, this would not be enough to show that (A2) is false. For (A2) to be false it must be the case that if (#2) were to obtain, one would lack a justified belief.⁹⁶

⁹⁶Hence the significance of pointing out (#1) and (#3)-(#6) is to show that even if one could show that these are genuine options and would typically obtain when (BEN) obtains in the specified circumstances, this would not be enough to undercut (A2)(ii).

So, then, is relation (#2) sufficient for one to have a justified belief in (N)? An initial consideration in favor of (#2)'s sufficiency is that (SEN) *must* be a source of at least some degree of justification for (N). For the perceptual experience, (PET), alone lacks the content needed to justify one's belief in (N) because (N) concerns how things *might not have been*, something which perceptual experiences are unable to represent, and thus unable to justify.⁹⁷ Could (SEN) only contribute a small degree of justification without contributing enough to justify belief in (N)? Perhaps, but such a view is in need of motivation in light of the following considerations.

First, it's counterintuitive to think that one who did base their belief in (N) solely on (SEN) would fail to have a justified belief.

Second, given (A)(i), we do have *other* justified beliefs which are solely based on seemings. But if basing beliefs on these other seemings is sufficient for having justified beliefs, how could (#2) could fail to be sufficient? One who denies the sufficiency of (#2) owes an explanation for this disanalogy.

Third, consider the possibility of a race of humans whose visual imagery "switches off" at a certain age though their perceptual system continues to

⁹⁷Since (N) is a conjunction, equivalent in meaning to the following:

(N*) (i) There is English text nearby, and (ii) there might not have been.

One might argue that a perceptual experience is what affords us justification for (N*)(i), while an imaginative experience is what affords us justification for (N*)(ii). As indicated, I'm happy to allow our perceptual experiences a role in justifying (N*)(i). What I find difficulty with is the idea that imaginative experiences can afford us justification for (N*)(ii). Here's the problem: imaginative experiences purport to show us possibilities, but (N*)(ii), if true, is not merely a *possibility*, but a "nearby" one insofar as it's a counterfactual claim about what *might* be. And I do not think imaginative experiences are a guide to how things might have been (or *would have been*), but (at best) only how thing could be.

work by taking normal perceptual stimulus and outputting seemings directly; that is, they have all the same seemings about their immediate environment that we would have, though their seemings occur independently of the usual visual phenomenology that typically accompanies (and is often responsible for) the seemings *we* experience. Intuitively, the “perceptual” beliefs this race would form solely on the basis of their seemings would be justified (absent defeaters). But if they can form justified beliefs about their immediate environment solely on the basis of seemings, then the only way to resist the sufficiency of (#2) for having a justified belief in (N), would be to maintain that the epistemic power of seemings disappears when there is available something else on which to (partly or solely) base one’s belief (e.g., (PET)). But such a view is bizarre. For, in general, if x affords one justification to believe p , then the only thing that can upset one’s having of justification by x is some kind of defeater for p . So, for example, denying (#2)’s sufficiency in our case while affirming it in the case of this peculiar race would seem to require us to take (PET) to be some kind of defeater for (N). But sense cannot easily be made of this.⁹⁸

⁹⁸These considerations in favor of the sufficiency of (#2) may prompt a worry concerning the degree of justification one might have in a case where one has a seeming and a visual experience that justify the same content. Suppose visual experience, VE, causes a seeming with content p , and that both the seeming and VE give one justification to believe p . One might object to Liberalism on the grounds that it implies that one’s degree of justification for p is greater than the degree of justification afforded one by either VE or the seeming independently. I agree that this is counterintuitive. But it is not a problem for Liberalism does not entail, nor is it otherwise committed to, the following additive principle: if X brings it about that one has enough justification to believe p (i.e., *prima facie* justification for p) and Y does also, then one’s degree of justification for p exceeds the degree of justification afforded one by X or Y alone.

Such is the case in favor of (A2).

In Defense of (A3)

Liberalism is the thesis that, absent defeaters, seemings provide one with justification to believe their contents. Since having a justified belief requires one to base their belief in a justifying ground, it's quite easy to see that Liberalism *can* explain (A2). For according to Liberalism seemings are (potential) justifying grounds,⁹⁹ thus any undefeated belief based on them will be justified.

Is Liberalism the *best* explanation? Notice that given (A2) we already have to accord very many of our actual seemings the ability to bring about justification. For we could not have justified beliefs which are (or could have been) based on seemings unless those seemings had that ability. The question, then, is whether there is some minimal thesis that can accommodate that fact which is weaker than Liberalism.

Consider a weakening of Liberalism along the following lines:

State Qualified Liberalism. Provided one lacks defeaters for p , if it seems to one that p and ϕ obtains, then one thereby has justification to believe p . The seeming does not itself provide one with justification; rather, it is the seeming *plus* ϕ that provides

⁹⁹An actual justifying ground for p is something X which is such that (i) one actually bases their belief in p on X , and (ii) X gives one justification to believe p . A (merely) potential justifying ground is something X which is such that X gives one justification to believe p though one may not have formed any belief in p (or if one has, one has not based it on X).

one with justification.

The first thing to note is that instances of State Qualified Liberalism may be consistent with Liberalism (depending on one's instance of ϕ). The second thing to note is that no instance of this thesis can explain (A2). For, as (A2) indicates, we justifiedly believe many things *solely on the basis of seemings* (or we could have done such). But if an instance State Qualified Liberalism is correct (and Liberalism is false), then any belief that is based solely on a seeming will be unjustified, *unless it is also based on ϕ* . So even if an instance of State Qualified Liberalism is correct, the truth of (A2) requires something more like Liberalism, namely, a thesis according to which seemings are *themselves* able to be justifying grounds.

Importantly, State Qualified Liberalism is distinct from:

Explanatorily Clarified Liberalism. Provided one lacks defeaters for p , if it seems to one that p , then one thereby has justification to believe p . The reason why seemings have this ability is owed to the fact that (EXPLANATION HERE).

Some possible explanations of Liberalism were enumerated above in section 2.2. Explanatorily Clarified Liberalism differs from State Qualified Liberalism in its implied conditions for having justified beliefs: Explanatorily Clarified Liberalism entails, whereas State Qualified Liberalism does not entail, that one can have a justified belief in p when one's belief is based solely on its seeming to be the case that p . The upshot of instances of Explanatorily

torily Clarified Liberalism is that they (purport to) explain *why* seemings are themselves justifying grounds without *requiring* that explanation itself to be a ground of one's belief. This is no small benefit, for any theory of justification that requires believing agents to base their beliefs on theoretical explanations concerning the source of one's justification risk making justification too hard to come by, e.g., they put justification out of reach for all save philosophically reflective individuals.

Interestingly, Explanatorily Clarified Liberalism offers many different ways of weakening Liberalism that explain, without vitiating, (A2). For example:

Explanatorily Clarified Reliabilist Liberalism. Provided one lacks defeaters for p , if it seems to one that p , *and seemings are reliable*, then one thereby has justification to believe p . *Explanatory Clarification:* its seeming to be the case that p is one's (potential) justifying ground, and the reason it is one's (potential) justifying ground is owed to the fact that seemings are reliable.¹⁰⁰

Or if one thinks only certain kinds of seemings are reliable:

Explanatorily Clarified Restricted Reliabilist Liberalism. Provided one lacks defeaters for p , IF it seems to one that p , *and that seeming has reliable origins*, THEN one thereby has justification

¹⁰⁰The function of the explanatory clarification is to clarify the "thereby" clause. For to say "if A obtains and B obtains, then C thereby obtains" is *unambiguous* in the sense that it tells us that C depends on and is explained by the obtaining of A and B. But it is *ambiguous* in the sense that it does not specify the nature of the dependence relation that obtains between A, B, and C. The present principle clarifies this ambiguity.

to believe p . *Explanatory Clarification*: its seeming to be the case that p is one's (potential) justifying ground, and the reason it is one's (potential) justifying ground is owed to the fact that that seeming has reliable origins.

But even if Explanatorily Clarified Reliabilist Liberalism is true, *provided we maintain (A2)*, the weakened version of Liberalism that follows will be liberal indeed, allowing for seemings of most kinds to bring about justification, e.g., perceptual, memorial, introspective, and intuitive seemings. Such a weakening of Liberalism will entail something like this:

Liberalism For All Practical Purposes. Provided one lacks defeaters for p , if it perceptually, memorially, introspectively, or intuitively seems to one that p , then one thereby has justification to believe p .¹⁰¹

Although this is, strictly speaking, all (A2) requires it's hard to see how it differs from Liberalism. For what is characteristic of perceptual, introspective, and quasi-perceptual memorial seemings is that they are had in virtue of certain kinds of conscious, phenomenologically distinct experiences, whereas in the case of intuition and merely propositional memorial seemings there is no such additional conscious experience in virtue of which one has the

¹⁰¹A full characterization of seemings that are perceptual, memorial, etc., would, I think, characterize them in etiological terms, connecting them in some way with certain, natural kinds of experiences (perceptual, introspective, quasi-perceptual memorial experiences) or certain kinds of cognitive competences (understanding, merely propositional memory). Space does not permit a thorough exploration of this matter, nor does much hang on my preferred way of carving matters here.

seeming. So long as this exhausts the kinds of seemings that one could have, then Liberalism For All Practical Purposes is equivalent to Liberalism. But if there are other kinds of seemings one could have, then they will not be equivalent.

It is true that Liberalism For All Practical Purposes is a minimal weakening of Liberalism, and that no stronger thesis is required to explain (A2). But explaining (A2) is not the only thing to be explained. An advocate of Liberalism For All Practical Purposes who resists Liberalism is committed to (i) there being seemings other than perceptual, memorial, etc., seemings and (ii) there being some explanation for why it is that only perceptual, memorial, etc., seemings bring about justification while others seemings do not. For my own part I do not know what these other seemings might be nor am I sure what could explain the epistemic efficacy of the seemings with which we are familiar but explain the epistemic impotence of the others with which we are unfamiliar.¹⁰² In the absence of some reason to think that there are other kinds of seemings which would be epistemically impotent (where their impotence cannot be explained by defeaters), one should find Liberalism the better of the two explanations for (A2).

Such is the case, then, for (A3). There may yet be considerations that force the Liberal to the more modest position of Liberalism For All Practical Purposes, but the epistemological costs of retreating to such a position are

¹⁰²My uncertainty here is owed, in part, to my uncertainty as to how to best answer (Q2), and I leave it as an exercise to sort how answers to (Q2) ought to affect one's views with regard to Liberalism and Liberalism For All Practical Purposes.

hardly remarkable for those who think that seemings are a defeasible source of justification.

4.4 From Liberalism to Rationalism

The movement from Liberalism to Rationalism is straightforward. Intuitions, I've argued, are seemings (section 2.3). Liberalism tells us that seemings of all sorts have justificatory power in the absence of defeaters (section 4.3). Thus it follows that intuitions also have justificatory power in the absence of defeaters. Hence Rationalism.

This argument for Rationalism will not be to the skeptic's liking, for in making assumption (A1) I have assumed that we know/justifiedly believe much of what we think we do. And since this includes knowledge had on the basis of intuitions, I have not issued any argument that will respond to core skeptical worries. However interesting and important *that* project might be, it was not the project I set myself to. My project was intended to provide an *explanation* for how it is that we have intuitive justification, and I take Liberalism to have provided us with such an explanation.

Now, Liberalism itself only offers us a partial explanation for Rationalism, for it is not wedded to any particular explanation for its own correctness. I outlined possible options one might take in section 3.2 by discussing Brutalism, Phenomenalism, Really Impure Coherentism, Pragmatism, Reliabilism, and Perspectival Reliabilism. However, I offered no arguments in defense of any particular option. That is a project I leave for future work.

4.5 Experimental Philosophy and Rationalism

One of the most pressing contemporary arguments for the rejection of the epistemic powers of intuition comes from the researches of experimental philosophers whose studies have been argued to indicate that, at least some of, our intuitions are responsive to *non-alethic factors*, i.e., factors which would make one's intuitions unreliable. For example, the experimental research, purportedly, indicates that some intuitions covary with one's cultural and educational background, socio-economic status, affective biases, and even more contingent factors such as the order in which one considers a series of thought-experiments.¹⁰³

John Bengson has helpfully indicated just how these experimental results, if correct, would threaten Rationalism.¹⁰⁴ He begins by pointing out that in the studies conducted by experimental philosophers their subjects are first (i) presented with a question about a particular example or case,¹⁰⁵ and then (ii) those subjects are instructed to provide an answer to that question. Answers

¹⁰³For instance, the research of Machery, et al. (2004) seems to show that Westerners typically have intuitions about reference consistent with Kripke's causal-historical view of reference while East Asians typically report intuitions consistent with the descriptivist view. The research of Swain, et al. (2008) seems to indicate that people's intuitions about Lehrer's Truetemp thought-experiment is affected by the order in which people are presented with other related thought-experiments. The research of Petrinovich and O'Neill (1996) seems to indicate that moral intuitions depend on how thought experiments are worded and framed. The research of Weinberg, et al. (2001) seems to indicate that epistemic intuitions systematically vary not only between Westerners and East Asians but also between people of different socioeconomic groups.

¹⁰⁴Bengson (forthcoming).

¹⁰⁵For example, in the study conducted by Weinberg, et al. (2001), subjects were given gettier cases and were then instructed to answer the question whether the gettiered subject "really knows" or "only believes" the gettiered claim in question.

provided by subjects in these studies are called “prompted answers.” Bengson goes on to put the experimental challenge to Rationalism schematically:

THE EXPERIMENTAL ARGUMENT AGAINST INTUITION

(EAA1) Subjects’ prompted answers have feature F (e.g., sensitivity to non-alethic factors).

(EAA2) F is an epistemically problematic feature.

(EAA3) Subjects’ prompted answers express subjects’ intuitions.

Therefore,

(EAA4) Subjects’ intuitions have an epistemically problematic feature.

(EAA5) Subjects’ intuitions are representative.

Therefore,

(EAA6) Intuitions have an epistemically problematic feature.¹⁰⁶

Bengson does not explicitly identify what epistemically problematic feature intuitions have if (EAA6) is true, nor does he specify the epistemic consequences that follow from their having such a feature. But it is fairly clear that the epistemically problematic feature is supposed to be roughly the same as whatever F is, e.g., *sensitivity to non-alethic factors*, and that one epistemic consequence of this is that intuitions fail to be an actual source of justification. Let’s F to be the epistemically problematic property of being sensitive

¹⁰⁶Bengson (forthcoming).

to non-alethic factors, and let us refer to it as *being SNAFE*.

There are different points at which The Experimental Argument Against Intuitions may be challenged. Bengson himself only challenges (EAA3), arguing that it is not only *possible* that there is a gap between the intuitions of the tested subject and their prompted answers, but that we have good reason to think there is an *actual* gap.¹⁰⁷ Others have challenged the remaining premises. For example, Ernest Sosa has argued against (EAA1), claiming that some form of equivocation may be occurring such that subjects are interpreting either the thought-experiments or the questions asked with regard to them in an unintended way. If correct, then subjects' prompted answers may in fact lack feature F, *pace* (EAA1).¹⁰⁸ Ernest Sosa, David Sosa, and Bealer, have opposed (EAA2), arguing that F is not truly epistemically problematic for it is also a feature of other forms justification-conferring experiences (e.g., perceptual experiences). Finally, (EAA5) has been opposed by Bealer, Williamson, and Ludwig on the grounds that there is a distinctive class of intuitions ("modal", or "conceptual", or "expert" intuitions) which experimental studies fail to test.¹⁰⁹

I find something promising in each of these responses to the The Experimental Argument Against Intuitions, but I will not be critically assessing them here. For, as I stated in the last section, my investigation of the nature

¹⁰⁷Begnson (forthcoming).

¹⁰⁸I.e., subjects' are failing to interpret either the thought-experiment or the question posed to the thought-experiment in the intended way. Sosa (2007a).

¹⁰⁹Bealer (1998, 213), Williamson (2007, 191), and Ludwig (2007, 149).

of intuitive justification attempts to *explain* rather than *justify* the existence of intuitive justification, and thus my investigation tables the skepticism issue and presupposes that intuitions are indeed a source of justification.

But even so, I want to flag an observation apt to be overlooked. For it is not clear just what kind of problem The Experimental Argument Against Intuitions poses to Rationalism. Assuming that SNAFE intuitions are apt to be unreliable, SNAFEness is epistemically undesirable. But what kind of problem does that pose for Rationalism? After all, Rationalism is not the view that intuitions *are reliable*, but the view that intuitions *are a defeasible source of justification*. Thus one can consistently maintain Rationalism while also affirming that intuitions are SNAFE.

To see this let us distinguish between *defeated* and *undefeated* defeasible sources of justification, where a defeasible source is *defeated* if every deliverance of that source is defeated (i.e., fails to yield propositional justification to believe that deliverance), otherwise it is *undefeated*.¹¹⁰ Rationalism is the view that intuitions are a *defeasible* source of non-inferential justification, not that they are an *undefeated* defeasible source of non-inferential justifica-

¹¹⁰We could then go on to distinguish between undefeated sources which are, nevertheless, defeated *in certain contexts* or *domains*. For example, one might hold that it is not intuitions generally which are an undefeated defeasible source of justification but only, say, *modal intuitions* (see section 2.3.2). And one might further hold that empirical evidence of the unreliability of modal intuitions *in ethics and epistemology* results in modal intuitions being a defeated defeasible source of justification *in ethics and epistemology* but not on other matters. Maintaining such a view requires more precisification, but for present purposes we needn't worry about that. For the point I am going to make on behalf of Rationalism (which is a thesis that is not restricted to any context or domain) is quite general and can be made on behalf of restricted forms of Rationalism.

tion. Accordingly, the fact that intuitions may be unable to actually justify any belief owing to their SNAFEness does not imply that Rationalism is false *without some further assumption*. Thus, on its own The Experimental Argument Against Intuitions can at most show that SNAFE intuitions are a *defeated* defeasible source of justification,¹¹¹ which is consistent with Rationalism.

An interesting fall out from this is that even if intuitions are a defeated defeasible source of justification, it remains possible for them to confer some, possibly significant, degree of justification on their deliverances. For all that follows from the fact that intuitions are a defeated defeasible source of justification is that each of their deliverances are defeated. But that only means that we lack *ultima facie* justification to believe anything on the basis of our intuitions. But this still allows for intuitions to afford us *some* degree of justification.¹¹² And this may be all that is needed to legitimize the habit philosophers have of treating intuitions as evidence. (However, the prospect of such a position will hang on (i) one's theory of defeaters (i.e., to what

¹¹¹Under the plausible assumption that evidence of a source's unreliability would compromise its ability to justify any belief.

¹¹²Again, throughout when I speak of "having justification to believe *p*" (= propositional justification) I always mean "having *ultima facie* justification to believe *p*", where one has *ultima facie* justification to believe *p* iff one has *undefeated prima facie* justification to believe *p*. To have *prima facie* justification to believe *p* is to have a *degree* of justification strong enough to merit belief in *p* from the epistemic point of view. (See Alston (1989, 7), Pollock and Cruz (1999, 32), and Senor (1996).) A *defeater* for a proposition *p* is any mental state one is in (e.g., a belief or experience or combination thereof) that prevents one from having *ultima facie* justification to believe *p*. (This is roughly Pollock and Cruz's (1999, 195) definition; cp. Bergmann (2005) who defines defeaters in terms of justified belief (= doxastic justification) rather than propositional justification.) Also, one *lacks* defeaters for *p* iff one either has no defeater for *p* or one has only defeated defeaters for *p*.

extent evidence of unreliability decreases the degree of justification afforded by a source) and (ii) how extensive the implications for unreliability are from experimental studies of intuitions.)

One might wonder whether The Experimental Argument Against Intuitions could ever pose a challenge to Rationalism? The answer is “yes,” but in order to pose a threat to Rationalism, The Experimental Argument Against Intuitions must be such that the truth of its conclusion, (EAA6), in conjunction with with some other assumption implies the following:¹¹³

(\neg Rationalism) If intuitions are SNAFE, then intuitions lack some property needed for them to be a defeasible source of justification.

Clearly (EAA6) does not entail (\neg Rationalism) alone. So what further assumption is needed? One way of reaching (\neg Rationalism) from (EAA6) is with the following assumption:

(Assm#1) (a) *Reliability* is needed in order for intuitions to be defeasible sources of justification, and (b) SNAFE intuitions are unreliable.

However, there may also be a second way in which The Experimental Argument Against Intuitions can be used to show that Rationalism is false. This way has nothing to do with the *truth of (EAA6)*, but with our *having justification to believe (EAA6)*. Assuming one is in a position to acquire

¹¹³Again, I’m taking F to be SNAFEness.

justification to believe (EAA6) given The Experimental Argument Against Intuitions, one can reach (\neg Rationalism) with the following assumption:

(Assm#2) (a) *One's having justification to believe intuitions are reliable* is needed in order for intuitions to be defeasible sources of justification, and (b) we lack justification to believe that SNAFE intuitions are reliable.

Both (Assm#1) and (Assm#2) involve substantial epistemological commitments, and it is difficult to see how one might argue for either assumption without treating intuitions as an undefeated, defeasible source of justification. This fact raises difficult issues concerning the dialectic between opponents and proponents of Rationalism. I address some of these issues in chapter 6. For now, all I want to note is that The Experimental Argument Against Intuitions does not pose a direct threat to Rationalism, even if its conclusion is true or we have justification to believe it is true. Further assumptions are needed.

5 The Epistemology of Seemings III: Objections

Section 5.1 clarifies the relation between Liberalism and “basic knowledge” or “basic justification” views, according to which a source’s ability to justify a claim is independent of one’s justification to believe that source reliable. I show that Liberalism is consistent with the affirmation as well as the denial of basic knowledge/justification, and then set forth two arguments of Cohen’s which threaten Liberals who endorse basic knowledge/justification: the first is that Liberalism allows one to acquire justification for thinking seemings reliable too easily; the second is that Liberalism is deeply incoherent. Sections 5.2 and 5.3 respond to these objections and show that the rejection of basic knowledge/justification either (i) forces one to endorse an implausible skepticism or (ii) allows us to come by propositional justification all too easily. Section 5.4 responds to the charge that my defense of Liberalism has been problematically epistemically circular, and section 5.5 addresses the problem of cognitive penetrability.

5.1 Liberalism and Basic Knowledge/Justification

Views like Liberalism are often associated with what are called “basic knowledge” or “basic justification” views. Such views claim that one can come by knowledge or justification for p via a source s *independently of* knowledge or justification for thinking that s is reliable. Indeed, Cohen, Vogel, Bergmann

and others appear to think this the defining feature of views like Liberalism, and, if correct, then Liberalism stands in opposition to the following thesis:

Justification for Reliability (JR). One's justification to believe any deliverance of any belief source *s* depends on one's having justification to believe *s* reliable.¹¹⁴

Again, to have justification to believe *p* is to have *propositional* justification for *p*, where one has such justification only if one's *degree* of justification is high enough to merit belief in *p* from the epistemic point of view.¹¹⁵ A 'belief source' (or simply 'source') is any way of forming beliefs, and they are individuated by rules which tell one what to believe in certain circumstances (e.g., rule (RX): believe *p* when, and because, *p* seems true). The 'deliverance' of a source is whatever proposition one *would* believe if one were to employ the source while one was in the specified circumstances (e.g., *p* is the deliverance of (RX) when *p* seems true). Such sources are to be contrasted with 'sources of justification' which refer to any source which yields justification to believe its deliverances.

Cohen has argued that views which deny (JR) or similar theses¹¹⁶ are susceptible to the following objections:

¹¹⁴See Cohen (2002) and (2010), Vogel (2000) and (2008), and Bergmann (2004) and (2006). See also Reed (2006) and Weisberg (2010).

¹¹⁵See footnote 69.

¹¹⁶Cohen doesn't discuss (JR) but the following principles:

(K) A potential knowledge source *s* can yield knowledge for one only if one knows *s* is reliable. (Cohen (2002, 309).)

(J) We cannot have justified (perceptual) beliefs via source *s* without having a prior justified belief that *s* is reliable. (Cohen (2010, 141).)

The Easy Justification Objection. Any theory that denies (JR) and allows one to use a source to acquire justification to believe that that very source is reliable makes the acquisition of such justification objectionably easy (e.g., by legitimizing track-record arguments), therefore giving us reason to reject any such theory.¹¹⁷

The Incoherence Objection. Any theory that denies (JR) and allows for defeasible rules of inference actually implies (JR). Such theories, therefore, are incoherent.¹¹⁸

As far as I can tell, the reason Liberalism has been assumed to entail the denial of (JR) is owed to the fact that (i) Liberalism entails the denial of Conservatism, and the tacit assumption that (ii) Conservatism is true if and only if (JR) is true. But (ii)'s right-to-left direction is incorrect, and Liberalism's tension with (JR) is a mere appearance for there is at least one way for Liberals to maintain that one's justification to believe the content of a seeming *depends on* one's justification to believe seemings reliable. It is the way of Perspectival Reliabilism, according to which it is one's justification to believe seemings reliable that *makes* seemings justifying grounds for belief

A natural reading of Cohen has us interpret the modal force of (K) and (J) as expressing a kind of dependence relation. Thus, these principles are logically stronger than (JR), for one cannot have knowledge or justified belief without having justification to believe. Thus if Liberalism is inconsistent with (JR) it is inconsistent with (K) and (J) also.

¹¹⁷Vogel (2008) and Cohen (2010) discuss the problem as I do here in terms of justification, but their earlier work puts it in terms of knowledge. See Vogel (2000) and Cohen (2002).

¹¹⁸Cohen (2010).

in their contents (see section 3.2). Thus, even if Cohen is right about the need to endorse (JR), this does not have any negative implications for every form of Liberalism, only those that deny (JR). Let's refer to any version of Liberalism that denies (JR) and thus allows for basic knowledge/justification as 'Liberalism_{BK}'.

Most Liberals, I think, will find little comfort in Liberalism's consistency with (JR) for they will want to deny both Perspectival Reliabilism and (JR). In what follows I undermine (JR), and show that Liberalism_{BK} can survive Cohen's two objections.

5.2 Does Liberalism_{BK} Make Justification too Easy?

Liberalism_{BK} is thought to make knowledge/justification to believe seemings reliable too easy because it appears to legitimize the following track-record argument: let ' $p_1...p_n$ ' denote specific propositions,

BOOTSTRAP

(B1) $p_1...p_n$ each seem true.

(B2) $p_1...p_n$ are true.

(B3) So, it seems true that $p_1...p_n$, and $p_1...p_n$ are true. (from (B1) and (B2))

(B4) So, seemings were accurate concerning the truth of $p_1...p_n$.
(from (B3))

(B5) So, seemings are reliable. (from (B4))

BOOTSTRAP has many virtues. Notice that each transition that occurs after premise (B2) appears impeccable: (B3) follows from (B1) and (B2) by and-introduction; (B4) is a semantic consequence of (B3); and (B5) follows from (B4) by enumerative induction.^{119,120} Therefore, since each of the transitions from those premises are legitimate, there is nothing *necessarily* problematic about this argument *qua argument*. Moreover, only the most austere skeptic would deny that it is at least *possible* for one to justifiedly believe premises (B1) and (B2). But how might one actually come by justification for premises (B1) and (B2)? Premise (B1) can be justified by introspection;¹²¹ and, if Liberalism_{BK} is correct, one's justification for each proposition in (B2) may be derived from undefeated seemings. Hence the problem: if Liberalism_{BK} is correct, it appears that we could use an argument like BOOTSTRAP to justify the claim that seemings are reliable. But such reasoning is so intuitively problematic that many take any view that licenses it to be subject to a reductio. Hence Liberalism_{BK}'s difficulty.

¹¹⁹Perhaps, one may acquire justification to believe (B5) by inferring it from (B4) only if (i) $p_1...p_n$ in fact constitute a sufficiently large and diverse collection of propositions (cf. Alston (1989, 327)). Or perhaps the collection needn't actually be large and diverse so long as one is in some kind of positive epistemic position with regard to the proposition that $p_1...p_n$ constitute such a sufficiency large and diverse collection. For example, perhaps one need only (ii) justifiedly believe it, or (iii) have justification to believe it, or (iv) else have no reason to think it false. (See section 7.5 for a short discussion of such requirements.) However, the present objection to views such as Liberalism which deny (JR) does not turn on this issue, and the objection will still go through even if we assume that (i)-(iv) are satisfied.

¹²⁰See Cohen (2010) for an able defense of each of these transitions.

¹²¹Only a very radical skeptical position would preclude this, and most party to the debate concerning track-record arguments accept this. See Cohen (2002) and (2010), van Cleve (2003), and Vogel (2008).

Dogmatism-cum-(JR) is able to avoid commitment to the ability of track-record arguments to generate justification for their conclusions, given the following principle:

TYPE I EPISTEMIC CIRCULARITY

For any inference i , i fails to transmit propositional justification to its conclusion IF (AND BECAUSE) in order to have propositional justification for i 's premises one must already have propositional justification for i 's conclusion which is independent of one's propositional justification for its premises.¹²²

For if (JR) is right, then one needs justification to think seemings are reliable if any seeming is to yield justification. Thus, having justification (B2) in the above track-record argument requires one to already have justification for its conclusion, (B5). Thus, if Type I Epistemic Circularity and (JR) are both correct, then BOOTSTRAP is not the sort of argument that is able to afford one any justification for its conclusion—a conclusion many find intuitively correct.¹²³

But notice that this is not the only way to avoid commitment to track-record arguments. One might insist on the following limit on the ability of

¹²²This condition is central to the debate over whether or not Moore's proof provides or merely assumes justification for its conclusion. Interestingly, those enmeshed in this debate tend to agree that arguments which suffer from the indicated form of epistemic circularity do fail to transmit; what they disagree about is whether or not Moore's proof runs afoul of this condition. Compare Pryor (2004, 359-60) and (forthcoming) with Wright (2000), (2003), and (2004). See Silins (2005) and Tucker (2010a) for a critical discussion of this type of condition.

¹²³See Cohen (2002) for an explanation; see Bergmann (2004) and (2006), van Cleve (2003), and Weisberg (2010) for challenges to Cohen.

arguments to generate justification for their premises:

TYPE II EPISTEMIC CIRCULARITY

For any inference i , i fails to transmit propositional justification IF
(AND BECAUSE) one's propositional justification for i 's premises
depend on a method M , and i 's eventual conclusion is that ' M
is reliable' (or that ' M is a source of justification').¹²⁴

Some might object to this principle on the grounds that it's unacceptably ad hoc. But I do not want to enter into a defense of this principle here. Rather, what I want to show in the remainder of this section is that, whatever its other virtues, (JR) is ultimately untenable and thus (i) it poses no threat to Liberalism_{BK}, and (ii) it cannot be used to resolve problems of inferential justification which arise in connection with track-record arguments.

Consider a principle cousin to (JR):

(K/J) Necessarily, if one knows (justifiedly believes) p on the basis of it's being a deliverance of source s , that knowledge (justified belief) depends on one's knowledge (justified belief) that s is reliable.¹²⁵

Originally, it was principles akin to (K/J), rather than (JR), that were used to undermine views like Liberalism which seemed to allow one to employ an argument like BOOTSTRAP to acquire justification to believe some putative

¹²⁴For defense of just such a principle see Vogel (2008). For opposition see Cohen (2010). For an alternative principle intended to aid those who reject (JR) see Weisberg (2010).

¹²⁵See Cohen (2002) and Vogel (2000).

source of justification reliable by employing that very source. This was supposed to be so counterintuitive that it afforded us reason to reject views like Liberalism and to accept principles like (K/J).

However, it has been noted that principles like (K/J) have clear skeptical implications. The problem is that any condition on knowledge (justification) that requires one to have a *belief* which involves a concept such as RELIABILITY or a conception of one's belief sources restricts knowledge (justification) to those beings who actually possess the requisite concepts. But, intuitively, children, the cognitively impaired, and intelligent animals who lack such concepts, nevertheless, have both knowledge and justified beliefs.¹²⁶ Call this *the over-intellectualization objection*.¹²⁷ This problem appears to be a strong reason to endorse (JR) and reject stronger principles like (K/J) that require such beliefs. For a subject can satisfy (JR) without having any beliefs about the reliability of their sources so long as they have propositional justification for (= justification to believe) claims about the reliability of their sources.¹²⁸

¹²⁶Schmitt (2001, 184-185) draws attention to empirical evidence which implies that young children lack a concept of reliability and thus cannot form beliefs involving it.

¹²⁷It has been suggested to me that we may want to actually deny that cognitively unsophisticated subjects such as children lack knowledge and justified belief, and instead hold that we just talk this way analogically or to encourage them to eventually become thinkers that can have knowledge. I regard this as counterintuitive. Indeed, it's an odd epistemology that would disallow children, for example, simple perceptual knowledge in normal circumstances when they have the same cognitive faculties that we do *and lack sorts of reasons we have for rationally doubting the reliability of their faculties*. Indeed, one might think that it should be easier for children to have simple perceptual knowledge than adults, given the way in which *we*, but not young children, are able to appreciate the force of skeptical arguments. Even Cohen (2002) who recognized the over-intellectualization problem facing (K/J) early on, was unwilling to accept this view outright (see next footnote).

¹²⁸Zalabardo (2005, 49-50) defends a principle akin to (JR) in response to the over-intellectualization objection. Cohen (2002) also observed this problem and sought to

But now we must ask what it takes for one to have propositional justification. For even if one need not have a belief in the reliability of a source, the correct theory of propositional justification might require that one be *able* in some sense to have such a belief. From which it would follow that creatures lacking such an ability will lack propositional justification in addition to lacking doxastic justification and knowledge. Take for example John Turri's recent defense of the view that in order to have propositional justification for p one must be in a position to acquire a justified belief in p :

(PJ) Necessarily, S has justification to believe p at t only if S has justification to believe p at t BECAUSE S currently possesses at least one means of coming to believe p at t such that, were S to believe p in one of those ways, S would thereby have a justified belief in p .¹²⁹

(PJ) entails that having propositional justification for p at t requires having the ability to form a justified belief in p at t . If (PJ) is correct, then (JR) implies that creatures who lack the ability to form beliefs involving the concept RELIABLE at t cannot have propositional justification to believe anything involving those concepts at t . And this makes (JR) likewise susceptible to

deflect it by distinguishing between two kinds of knowledge, one of which does not have (K/J) as a requirement and another kind of knowledge one which does—but with neither sort of knowledge can one employ a track-record argument to show that one's basic sources of justification are reliable. Cohen has since defended a weaker version of the principle akin to (JR), though it is unclear whether he has also rejected the stronger cousin principle (see Cohen (2010), see also Vogel (2008)).

¹²⁹Turri (2010, 320).

the over-intellectualization objection for surely children, et al. have propositional and doxastic justification as well as knowledge at t despite lacking the ability to have beliefs involving the requisite concepts at t .

Advocates of (JR) can either accept this consequence or else provide a theory of propositional justification that loosens the restrictions on what it takes to have propositional justification so that children, et al. are able to have propositional justification at t despite their lacking the ability to form beliefs involving certain crucial concepts at t . But any theory of propositional justification that loosens the requirements for propositional justification so much so that creatures who lack not only the concept RELIABLE and a conception of one's belief sources but the ability to easily acquire them will, ironically, risk making the acquisition of propositional justification too easy for the rest of us. For example, there is much I do not know or even have justification to believe due to limited computational abilities as well as the lack of certain concepts. But if this doesn't matter for having propositional justification then this implies that I have propositional justification to believe all sorts of things which I intuitively do not have justification to believe, e.g., certain difficult mathematical theorems, certain obscure doctrines of physics, the meaning of statements in languages I'm ignorant of, and so forth.¹³⁰

As far as I can tell the most plausible way to avoid this problem of making propositional justification too easy while avoiding the over-intellectualization

¹³⁰The exact consequences here will depend on just how loose one gets with propositional justification. In the next section I discuss some particular consequences that follow from Cohen's (2010) view of propositional justification.

objection is to deny (JR), and thus eliminate the threat it posed to Liberalism_{BK}. This does not show how Liberals_{BK} might avoid BOOTSTRAP, but it does show that the attempt to avoid BOOTSTRAP with (JR) founders on a surprisingly similar problem in allowing us to come by justification too easily.

5.3 Is Liberalism_{BK} Incoherent?

Cohen thinks that theories which deny (JR) and endorse defeasible rules of inference turn out to be incoherent because they imply (JR). Since Liberalism, as described above, is itself consistent with (JR), the incoherence objection only applies to Liberalism_{BK}. But, as I hope to show, the objection fails to demonstrate any incoherence in Liberalism_{BK}.

Since Cohen's discussion centers on theories of perceptual justification which deny (JR) rather than on Liberalism_{BK} in particular, in what follows I will present Cohen's objection as if Cohen had Liberalism_{BK} in view while making the objection. To see how the incoherence objection gains traction, take the following defeasible rule of inference:

(R) *From p seems true infer p .*

With (R) and by engaging in suppositional reasoning Cohen thinks we can show that we have pre-existing *a priori* justification to believe that seemings are reliable. Letting ' p_1 ' denote some arbitrary proposition, consider the following argument:

A PRIORI BOOTSTRAPS

(A1) p_1 seems true. (assumption)

(A2) p_1 . (from (A1) and (R))

Therefore,

(A3) If p_1 seems true, then p_1 . (suppositional reasoning from (A1) and (A2))

(A1) is an assumption made for the purposes of constructing a conditional proof, and (A2) follows from (A1) and (R). And by conditional reasoning we can infer (A3) from (A1) and (A2). Notice (A3) implies that seemings are reliable, and it does so independently of and prior to any particular experience of a proposition seeming true. For (A3) follows just from the conditional reasoning in the above argument and the rule of inference (R). Cohen then goes on to argue, as I'll show below, that *we* not only *have* justification to believe (A3) but that *we had* justification to believe it *independently of and prior to* any particular experience of a proposition seeming true. From which it follows that we never have justification to believe p because it seems true unless we also have a seemings-independent and pre-existing justification to believe seemings are reliable. But that appears to imply (JR). Thus, Cohen concludes, views which deny (JR) and endorse defeasible rules like (R), actually imply (JR), thereby making them incoherent.¹³¹

There are two significant problems with Cohen's argument. First, it must be noted that even if we always had such a seemings-independent,

¹³¹Cohen (2010, 150-155).

pre-existing justification to believe (A3), that does not actually support (JR). For (JR) tells us that the justification seemings generate *depends on* that seemings-independent, pre-existing justification. But having seemings-independent, pre-existing justification to believe (A3) only entails the following:

(WJR) One has justification to believe a deliverance of a source *s only if* one has justification to believe *s* is reliable.

And if Liberalism_{BK} implies (WJR), that's fine for Liberalism_{BK} is consistent with (WJR)'s merely material claim. So it's not clear that Cohen has shown there to be any incoherence in denying (JR).

The second problem with Cohen's argument is that, as far as I can tell, Liberalism_{BK} implies neither (WJR) nor (JR) unless one makes implausible assumptions about how we come to have propositional justification. To see the problem consider the following question:

(Q3) By what means do we come to have this pre-existing propositional justification to believe (A3)?

To (Q3) Cohen provides an explicit answer:

I need not (and typically would not) engage in this suppositional reasoning. Still, there is an important sense in which I am justified in believing the conditional (e.g., (A3)), whether or not I carry out the reasoning. Using standard technical vocabulary,

we can say that I am *propositionally* justified in believing P just in case I can arrive at P via trivial reasoning. For example, before I considered this very sentence, I was justified in believing that I cannot see the Southern Cross constellation from in front of my house. Though I had not actually reasoned to this conclusion, I was justified in believing it in the sense that I could arrive at it via trivial reasoning (from my justified beliefs that I live in the northern hemisphere and that the Southern Cross is visible only in the southern hemisphere). In the case of the suppositional reasoning, I can arrive at the relevant conditional via trivial reasoning simply in virtue of my competence in using the rule.¹³²

Cohen's point is that we have propositional justification for (A3) even though we may not actually have performed the condition proof above because we are *in a position where we could easily have done so*. So a very natural way to understand his proposed answer to (Q3) is thus: there are nearby worlds, relevantly like ours, where I do engage in such reasoning and thereby acquire a justified belief in (A3), and it is this that gives me propositional justification for (A3) in the actual world.

But this answer to (Q3) re-introduces the dilemma of the previous section: it either implies that certain subjects who actually have knowledge/justified beliefs do not (the over-intellectualization objection), or it makes proposi-

¹³²Cohen (2010, 154).

tional justification too easy to acquire. The first horn of this dilemma is generated by the fact that for many thinkers (children, the cognitively impaired, “smart” animals) engaging in suppositional reasoning is not a nearby possibility. Cohen could respond by directing us to those nearby worlds where such thinkers can and do perform the above trivial reasoning and then claim that because of their other-worldly achievements, in the actual world these thinkers have propositional justification for (A3). But this generates the second horn, for it would make propositional justification too easy for the rest of us. Suppose you were handed a sheet of mathematical statements that were just beyond your ability to prove though each statement is a mathematical theorem. Suppose further that if your cognitive faculties were improved to the degree that a severely mentally handicapped adult’s would have to be in order for him to engage in Cohen’s suppositional reasoning then you would be able to complete the proofs. Intuitively, in the actual world you lack justification to believe that those statements are theorems. But if we make propositional justification so easy to come by that children, the impaired, and “smart” animals can satisfy (JR), then you would have justification to believe that those statements are theorems. But surely this is not so. In my view, both horns of this dilemma are sufficiently objectionable to give us reason to reject Cohen’s answer to (Q3).

At most what Cohen has shown is that those of us who are in a position to engage in his suppositional reasoning do have some kind of seemings-independent, pre-existing justification to think seemings reliable. But this

is perfectly consistent with Liberalism_{BK} because it fails to imply that the justificatory power of seemings depends on our justification to think them reliable.

5.4 A Reflection on Epistemic Circularity

So far we have encountered two arguments naturally labeled “epistemically circular.” First, there was the argument I offered in defense of Liberalism, the ABDUCTIVE ARGUMENT (section 4.3), which purported to show that seemings are *a source of justification* while our justification to believe certain premises of that argument depended on seemings for their justification.¹³³ Second, there was the track-record argument, BOOTSTRAP (section 5.1), which purported to show that seemings are *reliable* while relying on seemings to justify premise (B2). Both of these arguments are epistemically circular in some shared sense, which we can characterize thus: let us say that an argument Γ is *epistemically circular* just in case (i) one’s justification to believe at least one premise depends on a source of justification s , and (ii) the conclusion of Γ is that s has some epistemically desirable property, where an *epistemically desirable property* is any property that is desirable from the epistemic point of view. Since *being a source of justification* and *being reliable* are both epistemically desirable properties, by the above characterization

¹³³Specifically, in defending (A2) and (A3) I relied in intuitions (intuitive seemings) and introspective seemings to justify the claims I made about the relationship between propositional and doxastic justification, and the claims I made about what it is we actually do and could have based our beliefs on while retaining those beliefs justifiedly.

of epistemic circularity the ABDUCTIVE ARGUMENT and BOOTSTRAP are epistemically circular.

About such arguments it is natural to want to consider this question:

The General Question: What is the epistemic value of an epistemically circular argument?

Contrast two more specific questions we may ask about the value of epistemically circular arguments:

The Closure Question: Can one use an epistemically circular argument to show one *that* he has propositional justification to believe its conclusion?

The Transmission Question: Can one use an epistemically circular argument to *provide* oneself with propositional justification to believe its conclusion? That is, are epistemically circular arguments a source of propositional justification?

The difference between these two questions is that the first *only* asks if one can use an epistemically circular argument to show *that* one has propositional justification for its conclusion; while the second question asks if one can use an epistemically circular argument not only to indicate *that* one has propositional justification for its conclusion but also use such arguments as a *means* of acquiring propositional justification for its conclusion. Accordingly, an affirmative answer to the Transmission Question entails an affirmative answer to the Closure Question, but the converse is not true. We can answer

the Closure Question in the affirmative while denying an affirmative answer to the Transmission Question.

These two questions correspond to the difference between closure and transmission principles in epistemology, whose schematic form may be presented thus:

CLOSURE SCHEMA FOR PROPOSITIONAL JUSTIFICATION

IF one has epistemic property E for the premises of an argument Γ , and ϕ , THEN one has propositional justification to believe Γ 's conclusion.

TRANSMISSION SCHEMA FOR PROPOSITIONAL JUSTIFICATION

IF one has epistemic property E for the premises of an argument Γ , and ψ , THEN one has propositional justification to believe Γ 's conclusion *in virtue of* one's inference from Γ 's premises.

Here, E is to be substituted with some epistemic property such as knowledge, doxastic, or propositional justification, while ϕ is to be substituted with whatever other conditions must be satisfied such that whenever the antecedent is true, so is the consequent.

Notice that closure principles say less than transmission principles for transmission principles include an 'in virtue of' clause which attributes one's propositional justification for the conclusion to one's propositional justification for the premises and one's competent inference. In the case of propositional justification, this 'in virtue of' clause guarantees that anyone who

satisfies the antecedent of a correct transmission principle has gained propositional justification to believe the conclusion. By contrast, satisfying a correct closure principle leaves it open whether or not one has *gained* any justification for the conclusion *by inferring it from the premises*.

Closure principles, in some form or other, are widely endorsed by epistemologists, and, perhaps surprisingly, all of them can be non-trivially satisfied even when the argument at issue is an epistemically circular argument. For example:

(a) For all agents, ϕ , ψ , if an agent knows that ϕ , and knows that ϕ entails ψ , then that agent knows that (and thus has propositional justification for) ψ .¹³⁴

(b) If one knows P and competently deduces Q from P, thereby coming to believe Q, while retaining one's knowledge that P, then one comes to know that (and thus has propositional justification for) Q.¹³⁵

(c) If S is justified in believing $P_1 \dots P_n$ and knows that $P_1 \dots P_n$ jointly imply Q, then S is justified in believing Q.¹³⁶

(d) If S has a justified belief that p and comes to believe that q solely on the basis of competently deducing it from p, while retaining the justified belief that p throughout the deduction and

¹³⁴Pritchard (2005, 27) and Cohen (2002, 312).

¹³⁵Hawthorne (2005, 29).

¹³⁶Wright (2002), Silins (2007, 115), and Neta (2010, 692). Cf. Vogel (2008, section iv).

lacking defeaters for the conclusion, then S has a justified belief that (and thus propositional justification to believe) q.¹³⁷

This is a fairly representative set of closure principles that appear in epistemological discussions and all of them allow one to satisfy the antecedent when the argument at issue is epistemically circular. The conclusion to draw from this is that the epistemically circular argument I gave for Liberalism, and even BOOTSTRAP, may be used to *indicate that* we have propositional justification to believe their conclusions even if they happen to be epistemically circular and are not themselves able to *provide us with* propositional justification to believe their conclusions.¹³⁸

Thus, so long as one is committed to some kind of closure principle and it's possible for one to satisfy its antecedent, then one must endorse a positive answer to the Closure Question and thus accept that epistemically circular arguments are epistemically valuable at least insofar as they can indicate that we have propositional justification to believe their conclusions when the antecedent of the target closure principle is satisfied.

Now providing a positive answer to the Closure Question leaves open a

¹³⁷This single-premise closure principles is discussed, but not endorsed by Schechter (forthcoming). He offers what he takes to be a novel counterexample to this principle. However, for reasons I discuss in section 7.6, I do not think his counterexample is successful.

¹³⁸One might object on the grounds that both the ABDUCTIVE ARGUMENT and BOOTSTRAP are not deductive, but ampliative arguments and as such their premises do not *entail* their conclusions, which is something all but (c) require. But this seems to me to be irrelevant. For the it would be very odd to maintain that it is an *alethic relation* (i.e., entailment) holding between premises and conclusion that vindicates an otherwise problematic *epistemic relation* (i.e., epistemic circularity) holding between the premises and conclusion.

further question: if our use of an epistemically circular argument can indicate that we have propositional justification to believe its conclusion, what is the source of that justification? If we offer a positive answer to the Transmission Question, then we can say that it is our use of the argument itself that is *a* source of justification for that argument's conclusion.¹³⁹ But some will deny that epistemically circular arguments can be a source of justification even if they can indicate that we have justification for the argument's conclusion.¹⁴⁰ What, on such a view, might our justification be for the conclusion of epistemically circular arguments? Enoch and Schechter have argued that our source of justification to think certain belief forming methods reliable (e.g., methods like treating seemings as evidence for their contents) can be grounded in pragmatic considerations.¹⁴¹ Cohen and Sosa have argued that considerations of coherence may play a role here for when one believes the conclusions that follow (deductively, inductively, abductively) from other things one believes one increases the degree of coherence in one's belief system.¹⁴² White and Field have suggested that we may have a default entitlement for the conclusions of such arguments.¹⁴³ (Notice that one can adopt one or all of

¹³⁹For some who endorse this sort of view see Alston (1989), Pryor (2000), Kornblith (2009), van Cleve (2003), and Bergmann (2006).

¹⁴⁰Cohen (2002), Vogel (2008), and Wright (2004).

¹⁴¹Enoch and Schechter (2008). Compare Wright (2004).

¹⁴²The crucial assumption here is the coherence is a source of justification. See Sosa (2009, 239-243) and Cohen (2002). In section 5.3 I evaluated and then rejected Cohen's (2010) most recent attempt to explain how we have propositional justification for thinking certain sources of justification are reliable.

¹⁴³White (2006) and Field (2000). Where by 'default entitlement' they appear to be suggesting that its a kind of epistemic warrant that we get for free and from nowhere.

these explanations while at the same time adopting a positive answer to the Transmission question. To do so is to allow oneself the possibility of multiple sources of justification to think seemings reliable as well as sources of justification.)

I will not be defending any particular answer to the Transmission Question nor will I argue for or against any of the other possible options just mentioned. My point in this section is largely dialectical: so long as we have reason to believe some standard version of closure holds, we can maintain that epistemically circular arguments have the power to at least *indicate* to us that we do have justification to believe their conclusion even if they happen to be *unable to provide* us with it.

5.5 The Problem of Cognitive Penetrability

The epistemological problem of “cognitive penetrability” is a problem that arises when one’s experience with content p is caused by factors which, intuitively, seem to prevent one’s experience from conferring some epistemically positive status on p .¹⁴⁴ In the present context the relevant sort of experience is a seeming and the relevant epistemically positive status is propositional justification (= having justification to believe). Here are a couple examples, owed to Markie and Siegel, that motivate the problem.

¹⁴⁴The epistemological aspect of the problem has been discussed with regard to views like Liberalism—views which say that some presentational state or other is a source of justification—at least since Pryor (2000, 540-541). Those who have addressed it since include Markie (2005), Chudnoff (2010), Tucker (2010c), Siegel (forthcoming).

Case 1: Angry-looking Jack. Jill believes, without justification, that Jack is angry at her. The epistemically appropriate attitude for Jill to take toward the proposition that Jack is angry at her is suspension of belief. But her attitude is epistemically inappropriate. When she sees Jack, her belief makes it seem to her that Jack is angry at her. If she didn't believe this, it would not have seemed to her that Jack is angry.¹⁴⁵

Case 2: Desiring Gold. Suppose that we are prospecting for gold. You have a developed expertise that allows you to identify a gold nugget on sight but I have no such expertise. As the water washes out of my pan, we both look at a pebble, which is in fact a gold nugget. My desire to discover gold makes it seem to me as if the pebble is gold; your learned identification skills make it seem that way to you. According to (Liberalism), the belief that it is gold has *prima facie* justification for both of us. Yet, certainly, my wishful thinking should not give my perceptual belief the same positive epistemic status of defeasible justification as your learned identification skills.¹⁴⁶

In Case 1, the reason it seems, to Jill, that Jack is angry is Jill's unjustified belief that Jack is angry; in Case 2 it's your expertise that causes it to seem to you that the pebble is gold, whereas it is my desire for gold that makes it seem

¹⁴⁵This example is Siegel's (2011), but it has been modified slightly to fit more neatly with the epistemic thesis I've been defending, i.e., Liberalism.

¹⁴⁶This example is Markie's (2005, 356-357).

to me that the pebble is gold. Intuitively, the way in which these experiences were brought about also bring about epistemic differences, and, according to Siegel and Markie, the difference is to be spelled out in terms of justification: Jill's experience as well as my own fail to bring about justification because of the way in which they were caused. Yet, they argue, Liberalism about perceptual justification fails to respect this difference for it implies that our badly caused experiences do generate justification.

Markie and Siegel do not think cognitive penetration is always a bad thing, sometimes it can improve one's epistemic position as in the case of the experienced gold prospector. His experience is penetrated by his acquired expertise and thus puts him in an epistemically superior position to identify gold. However, throughout this section when I speak of cognitive penetration I am referring only to the bad sort that threatens acquisition of positive epistemic properties via seemings.

There are various options that have been floated in response to the problem of cognitive penetration:

(Always#0) Cognitive penetration never occurs, so undefeated seemings always provide one with justification.

(Always#1) Undefeated seemings always provide justification even when they have been penetrated, and penetration has no further epistemic consequence (e.g., it does not block knowledge).

(Always#2) Undefeated seemings always provide justification when

penetrated, but one cannot have knowledge when one's justification is the result of a penetrated seeming.

(Always#3) Undefeated seemings always provide justification when penetrated, but cannot amount to knowledge when one is epistemically responsible for the penetration.

(Sometimes) Undefeated seemings provide justification when penetrated only in those cases where one is not epistemically responsible for the penetration.

(Never) Undefeated seemings never provide justification when penetrated.

(Always#0) is the rejection of the phenomena of cognitive penetration, and has only been considered with respect to a rather limited form of Liberalism, namely, one that only allows *perceptually basic* seemings to generate justification. The rough idea is that visual seemings can have more or less robust content. An example given by Pryor is a case where one sees a police officer. The following two claims will seem true to the average person living in, say, the United States: (i) that there is an object in front of me, and (ii) that there is a police officer in a blue uniform in front of me. (i) and (ii) differ in that (i) is in some intuitive sense perceptually basic whereas (ii) is not. Thus one can avoid the entire problem of cognitive penetration by restricting the form of Liberalism they endorse to exclude non-basic seemings and then argue that a person's seeming to be angry and that a yellowish pebble seeming

to be gold fail to be basic in the target sense.¹⁴⁷ The form of Liberalism I have been arguing for makes no such distinction, allowing for both basic and non-basic seemings to generate justification. So this is not a response I will pursue.

(Always#1) is an endorsement of the idea that cognitive penetration has no epistemic consequences whatsoever when one lacks reason to think a given seeming has been penetrated, and thus amounts to a denial of the problem of cognitive penetrability.¹⁴⁸

(Always#2) is an endorsement of the idea that cognitive penetration has no *justificatory* consequences, though it does have consequences for *knowledge*. For example, Tucker maintains that a cognitively penetrated belief may be epistemically justified but cannot amount to knowledge because cognitive penetration prevents a belief from being caused in the right sort of way and because being caused in the right sort of way is a necessary condition for knowledge.¹⁴⁹ Yet, one needn't endorse a theory of knowledge on which a causal condition must be satisfied. For example, according to Klein's defeasibility theory of knowledge, knowledge requires the absence of true propositions which if one were aware of them, one would have a defeater. Since cognitive penetration would make for such defeaters, this sort of defeasibility

¹⁴⁷Pryor (2000) and (2004) limits his Liberalism about perceptual justification to only perceptually basic perceptual seemings, though he does not give a precise characterization of what these amount to. Chudnoff (2010) also considers this sort of view in response to the problem of cognitive penetration. Pollock and Oved (2005, 337-338) allow for any perceptual seeming, basic or otherwise, to bring about justification.

¹⁴⁸Chudnoff (2010).

¹⁴⁹Tucker (2010c).

theory of knowledge would be another way of maintaining (Always#2).

(Sometimes) is a suggestion floated by Siegel, and is meant to capture the intuition that when one is epistemically responsible for a belief's penetration one is thereby prevented from acquiring justification. For example, Tucker gives a case where one induces a demon to deceive him and then erase from his memory the fact that he has been and sought to be deceived. Here one is epistemically responsible for their own epistemic plight. In response one might think that even though one is not aware of their plight or aware of their own epistemic wrong-doing in seeking such a plight the fact that one is epistemically blameworthy generates some epistemic badness.¹⁵⁰ (Sometimes) says this badness consists in one's being prevented from acquiring justification. (Always#3) says this badness consists in one's being prevented from acquiring knowledge.

(Never) is Markie's preferred option.¹⁵¹

(Always#0)-(Always#3) obviously pose no problems for Liberalism. So if any of these are correct, then Liberalism remains unthreatened by cognitive penetrability. By contrast, (Sometimes) and (Never) seem to be inconsistent with Liberalism, for they seem to imply that there are some undefeated seemings that do not provide one with justification. However, even if (Sometimes) or (Never) are correct, this does not automatically create an objection to Liberalism. Consider the following to interpretations of what the upshot

¹⁵⁰Tucker (2010c).

¹⁵¹Markie (2005).

of (Sometimes) and (Never) are:

(A) Either (Sometimes) or (Never) is correct and the problem of cognitive penetrability indicates that Liberalism is false because there are some undefeated seemings that fail to bring about justification.

(B) Either (Sometimes) or (Never) is correct and the problem of cognitive penetrability indicates that our theory of defeaters is wrong.

Notice if (B) is correct then the truth of (Sometimes) or (Never) does not upset the thesis that seemings are a defeasible source of justification. Rather, what (Sometimes) or (Never) indicate is that there is a source of *defeasibility* that is not captured by usual theories of defeaters on which defeaters are mental states one is in or one epistemically ought to be in. If correct, then, (B) suggests that there is a kind of *etiological* defeater that can prevent one from acquiring justification via a seeming. Since Liberalism is not itself committed to any given theory of defeaters, the fact that there may be etiological defeaters does not threaten Liberalism.

But let us assume that (B) is false and that there are no etiological defeaters. What response, then, should we have toward cognitive penetrability? For my part, I find (Always#2) attractive because the cases involving cognitive penetration that seem to pose a problem for Liberalism share a common feature with standard Gettier-type counterexamples to knowledge:

when one has a cognitively penetrated seeming, if one gets it right, one is, in some intuitively problematic sense, *lucky*. And this kind of luck seems to be the sort that prevents one from acquiring knowledge, not justification. Consider how the two cases that introduced the problem of cognitive penetration appear to be of a kin with Goldman's fake barns: cases where one responds to one's evidence appropriately (and thus has justification) but due to external factors one's success in forming a true belief on the basis of that evidence is too much a matter of luck. My intuitions don't change when I move Gettier-type cases where one exhibits no epistemic irresponsibility to cases of cognitive penetrability where one is epistemically responsible so long as one is unaware, or unable to easily become aware that that seeming is in some untoward way the result of cognitive penetration. In both cases one appears to lack knowledge, but not justification.

6 Epistemically Self-Defeating Arguments and the Defense of Intuition

Rationalism is just the view that intuitions are a defeasible source of justification. In section 4.5 I drew a distinction between the view that intuitions are an *undefeated* defeasible source of justification (one might call this ‘Strong Rationalism’), and the view that intuitions are a *defeated* defeasible source of justification (one might call this ‘Skeptical Rationalism’). The concern of this chapter is with a certain line of defense on behalf of the former view (i.e., Strong Rationalism).¹⁵² For some have defended the *actual* epistemic value of intuitions against arguments which purport to show that intuitions lack epistemic value by showing that said arguments are epistemically self-defeating. The aim of this chapter is to show the limits of this sort of defense of intuition. Section 6.1 provides a characterization of the notion of epistemic self-defeat at issue in these extant defenses of intuition. Section 6.2 shows that a certain type of unreliability argument can still pose a threat to intuitions even if it is epistemically self-defeating. Section 6.3 concludes by indicating that, in certain circumstances, the net effect of epistemically self-defeating arguments against the epistemic value of intuition is that we should suspend judgement in the epistemic worth of intuitions.

¹⁵²Throughout this chapter when I speak of people defending the epistemic value or worth of intuitions, I mean to refer to defenders of Strong Rationalism.

6.1 Intuition and Epistemic Self-Defeat

In the next chapter we will attempt to give a full account of what an epistemically self-defeating argument is. For now, let us say an argument is *epistemically self-defeating* when belief in an argument's conclusion would defeat one's justification to believe at least one of that argument's premises.¹⁵³ Accordingly, unless one has some other source of justification for the conclusion of such an argument one lacks justification to believe that conclusion. We are not unfamiliar with such arguments. Take any argument Γ whose conclusion is that we cannot have justification to believe anything. Any such argument must be epistemically self-defeating, for if Γ 's conclusion is true or if we happen to believe it then we lack justification to believe any of Γ 's premises.¹⁵⁴

Considerations of epistemic self-defeat constitute an essential ingredient in some extant defenses of intuition and its role in philosophical thought and theorizing. For example, Joel Pust has argued that certain attempts to argue against the evidential worth of intuitions are bound to be self-defeating because they include as a premise an epistemological principle whose jus-

¹⁵³This should be restricted to *essential* premises, where such premises are ones that are needed if the premise set is to evidentially support the conclusion.

¹⁵⁴Being epistemically self-defeating is not a monadic property of arguments; it's a relation between thinkers and arguments. An argument whose conclusion is 'the author of this paper is not justified in believing anything' is epistemically self-defeating for this paper's author only, not its readers. Also, there are other ways for an argument to be epistemically self-defeating that I will not be discussing. For instance, an argument's conclusion can call into question the form of inference the argument exemplifies, or it can call into question one's ability to reliably make such inferences, or a conclusion can be a self-defeating proposition ('this proposition is unjustified' or ' p and I am not justified in believing p ').

tification itself seems to rely on the evidentiary value of our intuitions.¹⁵⁵ But this would defeat one's justification to believe the conclusion of such an argument against intuitions.^{156,157} George Bealer has argued that it's epistemically self-defeating to reject the evidentiary value of intuitions for it is by our intuitions (alone) that we are able to make basic epistemic classifications integral to any theorizing. That is, we rely on intuitions to determine what counts as an experience, an observation, a theory, an explanation, a simple explanation, a law of nature, a deductively valid argument, a logical truth, a theoretical virtue, etc. Thus, any theory that makes these basic epistemic classifications and yet rejects the evidentiary value of intuitions will itself be unjustified.¹⁵⁸ As a final example, Laurence Bonjour argues that in order for one to have justification to believe the conclusion of an argument one must

¹⁵⁵By speaking of intuitions having evidential value or worth I mean that intuitions are a source of evidence that justify beliefs.

¹⁵⁶The epistemological principle Pust attacks is this: "Aside from propositions describing the occurrence of her judgments, S is justified in believing only those propositions which are part of the best explanation of S's making the judgments that she makes." See Pust (2001, 236, 249-51).

¹⁵⁷Michael Huemer (2007, 39-41) has argued along similar lines, though in defense of the more general claim that seemings of all sorts have evidential worth (intuitions are just one kind of seeming according to Huemer). For in order to reject the evidential worth of seemings, says Huemer, it is a contingent fact that one will end up epistemically basing their opposition to seemings on seemings. Thus, those who deny that seemings have evidential worth "are in a self-defeating position, in that their views cannot be both true and justified," (30).

¹⁵⁸Bealer (1992, 104-108, 119ff). Bealer's point is not so much that an *argument* is self-defeating, but that a given epistemological *position* (namely, an empiricism that rejects intuitions) is epistemically self-defeating in the sense that if it were true, we would not be justified in believing it. Nevertheless, Bealer's thesis clearly implies that any argument against intuition which employs premises that make use of any basic epistemic classification will be an epistemically self-defeating argument. For convenience, in this essay I will speak as though Bealer's concern was with epistemically self-defeating *arguments*.

have a reason to think that the conclusion is true or else likely to be true if the premises are true. But intuition alone is fit to give us such a reason. Thus, any (non-question begging) argument against the evidential value of intuition must presuppose its epistemic worth, thereby making arguments against intuition epistemically self-defeating.^{159,160}

Defending intuition after this manner has the structure of a *reductio*: the intuition defender provisionally grants his opponent's premises but then goes on to show that if the conclusion is true some badness follows, where the badness at issue forms a central aspect of the defender's defense against his opponent. In each of the three cited cases, the badness at issue is epistemic self-defeat. And the upshot of establishing that one's opponent uses a self-defeating argument is that such arguments fail to give anyone a reason to accept their conclusion.

However dialectically successful the appeals to epistemic self-defeat made by Bealer, BonJour, and Pust might be, there is one kind of argument against intuition where considerations of self-defeat cannot provide an adequate de-

¹⁵⁹BonJour (1998, 4-6). BonJour does not often use the term 'intuition', preferring instead the term 'rational insight' to designate our source of *a priori* justification. See BonJour (1998, 102). Note also the higher-order requirement on inferential justification that BonJour presupposes: it is not enough that an inference makes the conclusion likely to be true or that one competently employ such an inference, one must also have reason to think that the inference at least makes the conclusion likely to be true. Externalists of various sorts will buck such stipulations.

¹⁶⁰Each of these authors take intuition to be a source of *a priori* justification. However, not all agree with this view of intuition. (See Kornblith (2002, 7-8) and Devitt (2010, 292).) This issue is of marginal relevance here, for all that Bealer, BonJour, and Pust need to run the arguments summarized above is that intuition be a source of justification; it does not matter what *type* of justification it yields.

fense of intuition. This kind of argument moves from the premise that intuition is not reliable to the conclusion that we should not treat it as a source of evidence that justifies beliefs. What we will see is that the Bealer-BonJour-Pust reductio strategy fails to sufficiently defend intuition against this type of argument even if it is epistemically self-defeating. The problem is that their reductio strategy can at most show that epistemically self-defeating arguments are *unable to justify the rejection* of intuitions as evidence, but this leaves open the position that at least some epistemically self-defeating arguments might *justify suspending judgement* in the evidential value of intuitions.

To evaluate this kind of unreliability argument I will proceed after the Bealer-BonJour-Pust fashion of granting the key premises and then showing how epistemic self-defeat might be generated by an argument that employs them. But the upshot will not be a defense of intuition—or at least not a complete defense of intuition.

6.2 Epistemic Self-Defeat and the Unreliability Argument

In what follows I will often speak of propositions being justified and (equivalently) of thinkers having justification to believe, or having justification for, certain propositions. To say that a proposition p is justified (for some thinker) is to say that one has *ultima facie* justification to believe p , whether

or not one in fact believes it. I will not be concerned with the related epistemic properties of having mere *prima facie* justification or of having *some* justification; rather, my sole concern is with the sort of justification that is needed for one to have a justified belief.

The employment of intuitions by philosophers has its detractors, those who claim intuition is deficient and ill-suited to philosophy's aims. Such claims have been made on various grounds, but the particulars of these grounds needn't concern us.¹⁶¹ Our concern is with what help considerations of epistemic self-defeat might offer defenders of intuition vis-a-vis its detractors who argue in the following way:

(\neg Ri) Intuition is not reliable.¹⁶²

and from (\neg Ri) infer:

(\neg Si) Intuition is not a source of evidence that justifies beliefs.

¹⁶¹For example, there are Benacerraf-style explanatory worries about intuition since intuition is thought to yield knowledge of abstract facts despite the fact that intuitions are not plausibly causally dependent on such facts. This makes the supposed reliability of intuition seem unexplainable; and if such reliability is unexplainable, it has seemed to some that intuition could not be, or at least should not be *thought* to be, reliable. (For concerns of this sort see Field (1989, 230-239), Boghossian (2000) and (2001), Kitcher (2000, 75), and Devitt (2005, section 3-4).) This is what we might call *philosophical* grounds for thinking intuition unreliable. But there are also *empirical* grounds stemming from the recent work of experimental philosophers whose studies are said to show that intuition's deliverances are sensitive to features of one's situation that have nothing to do with the truth of what is intuited (e.g., the ordering of thought experiments considered, cultural biases, educational background, affective biases), thereby giving us reason to think intuition unreliable. (See Weinberg et al. (2001), Nichols et al. (2003), Alexander and Weinberg (2007, esp. 62-63), and Swain et al. (2008) for some relevant studies and discussions motivating this concern with intuition's reliability.)

¹⁶²I've named these and some other propositions in such a way as to help the reader recall their reference. The names themselves, unlike their propositional referents, should not be taken to have any kind of semantic complexity.

The inference surely seems valid, and it likewise seems as if one who had justification for $(\neg Ri)$, and inferred $(\neg Si)$ from $(\neg Ri)$ would thereby come to have justification for $(\neg Si)$. But for this to be the case, it seems that one would need justification for:

$(Sx \rightarrow Rx)$ Something is a source of evidence that justifies beliefs
only if it is reliable.

Otherwise it would be unclear just how one could come to have justification for $(\neg Si)$ solely on the basis of having justification for $(\neg Ri)$. $(Sx \rightarrow Rx)$ expresses a necessary condition sources of evidence must satisfy if they are to justify beliefs.¹⁶³ Let us call this argument from $(Sx \rightarrow Rx)$ and $(\neg Ri)$ to $(\neg Si)$, ‘the Unreliability Argument’.

Here the defender of intuition is in a ripe place to employ the Bealer-BonJour-Pust reductio strategy, which, as noted above, consists of two steps. The first step is *conciliatory*, for it grants the following:

DIALECTICAL ASSUMPTION (DA): The premises of the Unreliability Argument are both true and justified.

Of course, the defender of intuitions thinks (DA) is false: for he thinks that, at least, $(\neg Ri)$ is false and unjustified, but he provisionally grants it for the purpose of defusing the Unreliability Argument through considerations of epistemic self-defeat.¹⁶⁴ The second step is *confrontational*, for it argues that

¹⁶³Reliabilist and other externalist stances on justification entail $(Sx \rightarrow Rx)$. We will discuss the threat $(\neg Ri)$ poses independently of $(Sx \rightarrow Rx)$ at close of this section.

¹⁶⁴It may not be apparent why (DA) includes considerations of justification, for the above

EPISTEMIC SELF-DEFEAT (ED): The Unreliability Argument is epistemically self-defeating.

For example, following Pust, one might argue that the Unreliability Argument is epistemically self-defeating because $(Sx \rightarrow Rx)$ is an epistemic norm and as such our justification for $(Sx \rightarrow Rx)$ depends upon intuition being a source of evidence that provides us with justification for it; or following Bealer, one might argue that the Unreliability Argument is epistemically self-defeating because of the role intuition plays in concept application. If either of these thoughts are correct, then the Unreliability Argument is epistemically self-defeating.

To see that (ED) follows from these considerations note that each one implies the following conditional because each entails a certain justificatory dependence relation between the premises and the conclusion of the Unreliability Argument:

(1) If $(\neg Si)$ is justified, then $(Sx \rightarrow Rx)$ is not justified.

And given (DA) we have:

(2) $(Sx \rightarrow Rx)$ is justified.

Together these entail:

summary of the Bealer-BonJour-Pust strategy did not clearly include such considerations. The reason is that it is no concession to an opponent to grant the truth of some proposition p without also granting justification for it at least where p is to serve as a premise in some chain of reasoning. For the purpose of reasoning from premises is the transmission of justification from premises to conclusion, and no reasoning can succeed at transmitting justification to a conclusion without having justified premises.

(3) $(\neg Si)$ is not justified.

That is, we lack justification to believe that intuition is not a source of evidence that justifies beliefs. Thus (ED) follows if either Bealer or Pust's considerations are correct. But (ED) also follows if BonJour is correct that intuition is required if one is to acquire justification for the conclusion of an argument on the basis of the premises from which it was inferred. For if this is right, and if our justification for $(\neg Si)$ depends on some inference from justified premises, then the following conditional is true:

(4) If $(\neg Si)$ is justified, then $(\neg Si)$ is not justified.

which also entails (3). The result, then, is that even if (DA) were true, we would lack justification for $(\neg Si)$, i.e., we would not have justification to believe intuition lacks evidentiary value.

Such a result might appear to be a victory for the defender of intuitions for the defender has been able to show that from premises his opponent accepts (namely, (DA)), it follows that he lacks justification to believe $(\neg Si)$.¹⁶⁵ But this is only an apparent or, at best, a partial victory for those who think intuitions evidentially valuable. The problem is that the defender of intuitions thinks that we *are* justified in thinking that intuition *is* a source of evidence that justifies beliefs, i.e., (Si) is justified. But this claim can be jus-

¹⁶⁵This is clearly the case in the argument from (1) and (2) to (3). Whether or not this is the case in the argument from (4) to (3) depends on the correctness of BonJour's conviction that (i) in order to be justified in believing the conclusion of an argument from premises one must have reason to think the premises make the conclusion at least likely to be true, and that (ii) intuition alone can give one such a reason.

tified only if we lack justification to believe that intuition is unreliable. Thus, *if* there is sufficient reason to think $(\neg Ri)$ true, then (Si) cannot be justified and the fact that the Unreliability Argument is epistemically self-defeating fails to show otherwise.

In order to locate the lingering problem facing defenders of intuition it helps to put ourselves in their shoes by taking (DA) as an assumption. In making this assumption one puts oneself in a position to carry out the following conditional argument:

(5) $(Sx \rightarrow Rx)$ and $(\neg Ri)$ are each justified. (assumption)

(6) If $(Sx \rightarrow Rx)$ and $(\neg Ri)$ are justified and one competently deduces $(\neg Si)$ from $(Sx \rightarrow Rx)$ and $(\neg Ri)$, then (Si) is not justified.

(premise, discussed below)

(7) (Si) is not justified. (from (5) and (6))

Thus, given that the defenders have competently deduced $(\neg Si)$ from $(Sx \rightarrow Rx)$ and $(\neg Ri)$, what follows from our assumption of (5) is:

(8) If $(Sx \rightarrow Rx)$ and $(\neg Ri)$ are justified, then (Si) is not justified.

(conditional reasoning from (5)-(7))

Accordingly, *if* (DA), and thus (5), is correct, what follows from (8) is:

(9) (Si) is not justified.

Will the defender of intuitions concede (9)? That is, will the defender grant that he is not justified in thinking intuition is a source of evidence that justifies beliefs? Of course not. The defender will respond by pointing out that

(DA) is just an assumption that is neither true nor justified. But that's the point: showing that one's opponent's argument is epistemically self-defeating is not a sufficient defense of intuition vis-a-vis the Unreliability Argument. Rather, arguments against (DA) must be given *if* there is some (undefeated) reason to think it's true. Thus, the general lesson in the offing is that there is a limit on the usefulness to which we can put the observation that an argument is epistemically self-defeating for there are at least some epistemically self-defeating arguments, such as the Unreliability Argument, that can epistemically undermine one's position.

There are some concerns one might have about the above conditional proof for (8). In that argument much turns on premise (6) and this is something that *opponents* of intuition might not accept, perhaps because the only reasons for accepting it are based in some way on intuition. But that's fine. The point here is to see a problem *defenders* of intuition face, and they will likely accept, or at least take very seriously, both (6) and the following arguments I have to offer on its behalf.

I take (6) to follow from (i) the assumption that the contradictory of any justified proposition is itself unjustified,¹⁶⁶ and (ii) a reasonable deductive

¹⁶⁶One might wish to emend (i) in the following way:

(i*) The contradictory of any justified proposition *that is justified in virtue of being deduced from other justified propositions* is itself unjustified.

This qualification may be added to avoid concerns about Uniqueness: the thesis that one's total evidence determines a unique rational doxastic attitude towards any proposition. For even if Uniqueness is false and it is therefore *sometimes* epistemically permissible to either believe or not believe *p* on one's total evidence, it remains implausible to think that when one's total evidence *entails p* and one has *deduced p* from one's evidence that it can be epistemically permissible to not believe *p*. See White (2005) for a defense of Uniqueness

closure principle for justification.¹⁶⁷ Such a closure principle will resemble the following:

Closure. If premises $P_1...P_n$ are propositionally justified and one deduces C from them, then C is propositionally justified.¹⁶⁸

Yet certain qualifications are needed if Closure is to retain its plausibility in the face of counterexamples, and one might worry that epistemically self-defeating arguments constitute one type of counterexample that a reasonable closure principle must take account of. If so, then, provided the Unreliability Argument is epistemically self-defeating, (6) could not be taken to follow from Closure. However, it is unclear whether *this* epistemically self-defeating arguments does threaten Closure, for it seems plausible to think that it is impossible for the premise $(Sx \rightarrow Rx)$ of the Unreliability Argument to remain justified when one has competently *deduced* the conclusion, especially when one has recognized the self-defeating character of the argument. That is, in such cases one loses their justification to believe the premises, thereby avoiding the threat to Closure. (In the next chapter I will offer some epistemically

and Brueckner and Bundy (2011) for criticism.

¹⁶⁷I do not take (i) to extend to inconsistent propositions generally since recognition that two propositions are inconsistent may be well beyond one's ken. I do not think this the case with contradictions because their form (p and not- p) makes their inconsistency plain, at least for my target audience.

¹⁶⁸This closure principle gives a sufficient condition for when one has justification *to believe*, as opposed to when one justifiedly *believes*, the conclusion of a deductive inference. If our concern were with justified *belief* in the conclusion we would have to strengthen the antecedent of Closure so as to include justified belief in the premises, belief in the conclusion, and that one's belief in the conclusion satisfies whatever epistemic basing constraints there are, and perhaps other conditions as well to help deal with the lottery and preface paradoxes.

self-defeating arguments which, I think, *do* threaten Closure.)

But even if Closure needs some qualification to account for epistemically self-defeating arguments, (6) need not come into question. For one could also defend (6) by arguing that it follows from:

Quasi-Closure. If premises $P_1...P_n$ are propositionally justified and one deduces C from them, then $\neg C$ is not propositionally justified.

The idea behind this principle is that competent deduction from justified premises can *preclude* certain claims from being justified, namely, the *contradictory* of what was deduced. Quasi-Closure is quite plausible for its denial implies that $\neg C$ may be justified when propositions that clearly entail that $\neg C$ is false are themselves justified. But this does not seem possible, for in such a case one would have a rebutting defeater for $\neg C$ which is inconsistent with one having justification for $\neg C$. So (6) seems reasonably safe, thus securing our earlier conclusion that observing the epistemically self-defeating character of the Unreliability Argument fails to preserve one's justification for (Si) *if* there is sufficient reason to think $(Sx \rightarrow Rx)$ and $(\neg Ri)$ are true.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁹A referee pointed out to me that some might think that (8) cannot be justified if we are working in a context that takes $(Sx \rightarrow Rx)$ and $(\neg Ri)$ for granted because they clearly imply $(\neg Si)$ and, presumably, one depends on intuition for their justification to believe (6). Notice, however, that one's *actual* justification for (6) is not impugned by the fact that one has assumed (5) for a conditional proof. Conditional proofs are like ordinary proofs in that one is allowed to include in the proof anything one has (undefeated) justification to believe as a premise. In the present conditional proof the *assumption* is (5) whereas the *premise* the defender of intuitions takes themselves, or *should* take themselves as I argue, to have justification for is (6). Thus, one's actual justification for (Si) remains intact—provided that one does not actually acquire justification for both $(Sx \rightarrow Rx)$ and $(\neg Ri)$, thereby making them more than mere assumptions.

Now, there is a further argument for this same conclusion, one which does not depend on the externalist conviction that $(Sx \rightarrow Rx)$ obtains nor the aforementioned Closure and Quasi-Closure principles. This argument capitalizes on the relationship between justification and reliability. For even if the reliability of a source of evidence is not necessary for that source to generate justification, justification for thinking a source unreliable is enough to prevent that source from generating (undefeated) justification, and thereby prevents that source from justifying beliefs. Thus:

(10) If $(\neg Ri)$ is justified, then (Si) is not justified.

Consider what the denial of (10) would amount to: the admission that one could have undefeated justification to believe that intuition is unreliable and also have undefeated justification to believe that it is a source of evidence that justifies beliefs. But intuition cannot justify any belief when one has undefeated reason to think it unreliable since undefeated justification for $(\neg Ri)$ constitutes an undercutting defeater for *every* claim supported by intuition, thereby preventing intuition from justifying any belief.¹⁷⁰ This situation is analogous to the use of sense perception in a demon world when one has justification to believe that one is in a demon world. For being in a demon world makes sense perception unreliable, and so if one were justified in thinking they inhabited such a world, they would not be justified in regarding sense

¹⁷⁰Roughly, one has an *undercutting* defeater for p if one either believes or has reason to believe that their (supposed) source of justification for p does not make p likely to be true. And if one has justification for $(\neg Ri)$ then one does have such a reason for any proposition whose only support is its being the content of an intuition.

perception as a source of evidence able to justify beliefs.

Again, we are in a position to see the limitations of defending intuition by appealing to epistemic self-defeat. For if we grant (DA), then we thereby grant that $(\neg Ri)$ is justified, which in conjunction with (10) implies (9), i.e., they imply that one lacks justification to believe intuition is a source of evidence that justifies beliefs. Thus, since the defender of intuitions must endorse (10), (DA) poses a direct threat *if*, as I keep emphasizing, there is sufficient reason to think it true. But more specifically, what the argument of the previous paragraph shows us is that it does not matter how things pan out with respect to $(Sx \rightarrow Rx)$ for there is a direct threat to intuitions so long as there is sufficient reason to think $(\neg Ri)$ true. Thus the only adequate defense of intuitions is to undermine whatever reasons there might be to think $(\neg Ri)$ true. Appealing to considerations of epistemic-self defeat cannot help.¹⁷¹

6.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, we have seen that intuitions cannot be adequately defended merely by employing the strategy of Bealer, BonJour, and Pust. The defenders of intuition have to “get their hands dirty,” dealing with whatever reasons there might be for thinking that $(\neg Ri)$ is true. But we have also seen that if the Unreliability Argument is epistemically self-defeating, then

¹⁷¹And by undermining $(\neg Ri)$ we thereby undermine the further claim that is part of (DA), namely, that we have (undefeated) justification for $(\neg Ri)$.

opponents of intuition cannot be justified in believing that intuition is not a source of evidence that justifies beliefs. Thus, if opponents are to be justified in their rejection of intuition's evidentiary value, they must undermine whatever reasons there are for thinking the Unreliability Argument epistemically self-defeating, i.e., they must undermine the arguments of Bealer, Bonjour, and Pust at the very least.¹⁷²

But there is a final lesson to tease from our inquiry, one that follows from the previous two: if one has undefeated reason to think ($\neg Ri$) is true and undefeated reason to think (ED) is true, then skepticism with respect to intuition's evidentiary value follows. That is, one is not justified in thinking

¹⁷²In this paper we have focused on the epistemically self-defeating character of the Unreliability Argument and have been dealing with 'intuition' in a non-discriminatory way by ignoring the possibility that, say, intuitions in some domains are reliable while others are not. For instance, perhaps when it comes to math and logic, intuition is reliable but when it comes to metaphysics and ethics it is not. It must be observed that any attempt to defend the Unreliability Argument in this manner must alter its premises and conclusion in some way so that the conclusion does not indict all uses of intuition. The particulars, of course, depend on just how one attenuates their opposition to intuition. Notice that any emended argument will have a conclusion like the following:

(11) Intuitions of domain D are not a source of evidence that justifies beliefs.

And given that (11) is itself an epistemological proposition, it seems that any argument in support of it will have to employ some general epistemological principle (akin to $(Sx \rightarrow Rx)$). And, as Pust and Bealer have pointed out, it is difficult to see how else one could justify any such principle without at least some epistemological intuitions having evidentiary value. If this is right, then we could not be too restrictive concerning which intuitions have evidentiary value for whatever reasons there are for thinking, say, moral and metaphysical intuitions are unreliable (e.g., pervasive disagreement among certain groups) are also reasons for thinking that epistemological intuitions are unreliable. So, in the end, one *might* expect non-skeptical opposition to intuition to be quite moderate, allowing for quite a range of intuitions. But assessing the various arguments and positions one might take concerning intuition's reliability and justificatory power goes beyond the concern of this paper, which was to assess the usefulness of the self-defeat argument for intuition vis-a-vis the Unreliability Argument.

that intuition *is* a source of evidence that justifies beliefs nor is one justified in thinking that intuition is *not* a source of evidence that justifies beliefs. This would be surprising for one would think that if the Unreliability Argument suffered from epistemic self-defeat the challenge to intuitions would dissolve with it. But no such result follows so long as $(\neg Ri)$ remains undefeated. Moreover, one would think that if we were justified in thinking that intuition is unreliable, we would be justified in thinking it lacks justificatory power. But, again, no such result follows if the Unreliability Argument is epistemically self-defeating.¹⁷³

¹⁷³Ironically, this is a fact we can appreciate only if intuitions have evidentiary value given that I've relied on various intuitions to justify my arguments in this paper.

7 Epistemically Self-Defeating Arguments, Inferential Justification, and Transmission Failure

We often expand the set of propositions we have propositional justification to believe by making inferences from other things we have propositional justification to believe. When everything goes well such inferences transmit such justification from their premises to their conclusion, thereby making the conclusion something it previously might not have been: a proposition worthy of belief.¹⁷⁴ But not all inferences transmit propositional justification, transmission sometimes fails.

In this chapter I will isolate a previously unrecognized source of transmission failure, one that arises in connection with a class of arguments that are aptly labeled “epistemically self-defeating.” For example, an argument Γ whose conclusion is that Γ is itself an unreliable form of argument would seem to be epistemically self-defeating in some sense, as would an argument Γ^* whose conclusion called into question one’s justification to believe Γ^* ’s premises. As I will show, what is interesting, and troubling, about these sorts of arguments is that we cannot always chalk up their inability to justify their conclusions to the presence of any actual defeater. This in turn threat-

¹⁷⁴Many hold that inference transmits epistemic properties, e.g., Wright (2004), Tucker (2010a), Silins (2005), Sosa (2009), BonJour (1985), Alston (1989), Bergmann (2006a), Plantinga (1993), Pryor (forthcoming), Vogel (2008), and Hawthorne (2004).

ens our ability to articulate plausible, counterexample-free transmission and closure principles for justification.

En route to isolating an overlooked cause of transmission failure that occurs in connection with epistemically self-defeating argument we will encounter intermediate insights of independent interest: (1) we will unearth a new epistemic paradox along with a solution; (2) we will uncover various arguments for the dependence of propositional justification on doxastic justification; (3) we will see how this dependence resolves a couple related puzzles involving non-inferential propositional justification; and (4) we will discover an intuitive explication of the notion of an “epistemically self-defeating argument.”

Section 7.1 provides the setup for the problem cases involving epistemically self-defeating arguments. Section 7.2 provides the problem cases themselves and introduces our first intermediate insight. The solution to the problem cases is a new condition for transmission failure, and section 7.3 offers and defends that solution in addition to providing the second and third intermediate insights. Section 7.4 refines that solution, proposing a kind of epistemic modality that is intimately linked to the acquisition of propositional justification generally, and here we find our final intermediate insight. Sections 7.5 and 7.6 discuss the role the solution plays in formulating transmission and closure principles.

7.1 Preliminary Distinctions

Inferences are a vehicle for the transmission of epistemic properties from premises to conclusions, at least when all goes well. In what follows I want to examine cases which concern the transmission of *propositional justification* via inference. By “propositional justification” I always mean to refer to *ultima facie* justification to believe something, whether or not one actually believes it.¹⁷⁵ Accordingly, propositional justification is a fairly robust epistemic property, making any proposition that has it worthy of being believed. The typical contrast to propositional justification is *doxastic justification*.¹⁷⁶ To have doxastic justification is to have a justified belief, and to have this kind of justification one must not only have propositional justification but one must also satisfy the epistemic basing requirement—more on this later.¹⁷⁷

One might also wonder about the conditions required for the transmission of other epistemic properties such as knowledge, doxastic justification, or having only some justification. But in what follows my principal concern is with propositional justification. One reason for focusing on propositional justification is that it seems implausible to think that properties like doxastic

¹⁷⁵One has *ultima facie* justification to believe *p* iff one has undefeated *prima facie* justification to believe *p*. Thus understood, *prima facie* justification is justification sufficient to merit belief in the absence of undermining factors. See Alston (1989, 7), Pollock and Cruz (1999, 32), and Senor (1996).

¹⁷⁶For endorsement and discussion of this distinction see Feldman (2002, 46), Karcz (2000, 525-526), Kvanvig (2003, section B1), Pryor (2004, 352), Pollock and Cruz (1999, 35-36), Silins (2005), Swain (1979, 25), and Turri (2010).

¹⁷⁷To further clarify, whenever we say that one has a *justified belief*, what ‘justification’ is being predicated of is one’s *belief state* (the believing), not simply *the content of* that state (what is believed).

justification and knowledge, which require propositional justification, can be transmitted via inference without propositional justification also transmitting. Indeed, one would think that those stronger epistemic properties transmit (partly) in virtue of propositional justification transmitting, thus making a complete account of the transmission of these other epistemic properties dependent upon one's account of the transmission of propositional justification. Furthermore, it's reasonable to think that propositional justification can be transmitted to a conclusion even if knowledge and doxastic justification are not transmitted. A final reason, as we will see, for focusing on the transmission of propositional justification has to do with certain puzzles involving epistemically self-defeating arguments which can only be properly appreciated if one considers them in terms of propositional justification.

It will be helpful to regiment our discussion by defining what it means for propositional justification to transmit via inference. To provide such a definition we need to say something about the relationship between arguments and inferences. For our purposes, an *argument* is an ordered pair consisting of a premise set and a conclusion, and an *inference* is the (token) mental act of accepting some argument.¹⁷⁸ We can now define the transmission of propositional justification as a relation holding between a thinker and an inference:

An inference *transmits propositional justification* from premises
to a conclusion for a thinker S at $t =_{df}$ at t (a) S has proposi-

¹⁷⁸Tucker (2010a).

tional justification for the premises, and (b) *S* has propositional justification for the conclusion in virtue of having competently inferred it from the propositionally justified premises.¹⁷⁹

First, notice that I've defined the transmission of propositional justification in terms of *actual* inferences one makes on a given occasion. Thus, I'm setting to the side cases where propositional justification might transmit when one is *in a position* to make an inference, though, for whatever reason, one does not actually make that inference. This is a simplifying assumption because it allows us to set to the side questions about what one's epistemic position is when one fails to or is otherwise prevented from recognizing the consequences of what one has propositional justification to believe. Second, this definition of the transmission of propositional justification is not limited to valid deductive inferences; it encompasses the transmission of propositional justification for any type of inference (abductive, inductive). Whether "bad" forms of inference (affirming the consequent, hasty generalization) can transmit justification is a substantive question which should not be built into a definition of transmission. Finally, we've defined transmission over only *competent* inferences. By speaking of one making a competent inference I mean to exclude those instances where an individual might accept an argument for

¹⁷⁹Compare the characterizations of transmission in Wright (2003, 58), Silins (2005, 74-75), and Tucker (2010a) which differ primarily in *what* is being transmitted. Wright's concern is with the transmission of *a particular warrant*, Silins' is with the transmission of the property *having a warrant*, and Tucker's is with the property *having doxastic justification*. My concern is with the property *having propositional justification*. See Tucker (2010a) for an illuminating discussion of transmission-talk.

defective reasons that make it a conceptual stretch to say that one has “made an inference.” Suppose, for example, one accepts an instance of modus ponens because the grass looks greener today than it did yesterday or because their spiritual adviser insisted that one do so. In neither case does it seem correct to say the person in question made an inference, or at least not the sort that can transmit justification.

Now, when an inference transmits propositional justification to the conclusion of an argument one thereby gains *inferential* propositional justification for that conclusion. Yet, inferences can fail to transmit propositional justification, and epistemologists have investigated the question of when they fail to transmit. Given the above definition we can provide a *trivially* correct answer by claiming that whenever (a) or (b) are prevented from obtaining transmission fails. Although this answer is necessarily true, it is uninformative because it fails to specify the types of conditions whose obtaining can be *responsible* for transmission failure. A *non-trivial* answer to the question of when transmission fails is one that specifies features of one’s circumstance *in virtue of which* (a) or (b) can fail. In sections 5 and 6 we will see how specifying substantive conditions for transmission failure can help us construct plausible transmission and closure principles.

7.2 Puzzling Cases of Transmission Failure

To understand the puzzling nature of the puzzling cases of transmission failure we need to say a few words about defeaters. As I will use the term,

a *defeater* for a proposition p is any belief or experience (or combination thereof) one has that prevents one from having (*ultima facie*) propositional justification for p .¹⁸⁰ There are three kinds of defeaters to take note of: rebutting, undercutting, and higher-order defeaters. One has a *rebutting* defeater for p iff (i) one either believes that not- p , or (ii) one believes others things or has certain experiences (or some combination thereof) that make it the case that one epistemically ought to believe that not- p . One has an *undercutting* defeater for p iff (i) one either believes that one's grounds to believe p are not sufficiently indicative of p 's truth, or (ii) one believes others things or has certain experiences (or some combination thereof) that make it the case that one epistemically ought to believe that one's grounds to believe p are not sufficiently indicative of p 's truth. Lastly, one has a *higher-order* defeater for p iff (i) one either believes one lacks propositional justification for p , or (ii) one believes others things or has certain experiences (or some combination thereof) that make it the case that one epistemically ought to believe that one lacks propositional justification for p .¹⁸¹

The idea behind the second clauses in my construal of rebutting, undercutting, and higher-order defeaters is that one cannot avoid, say, having a rebutting defeater for p by simply failing to believe that one has only very

¹⁸⁰This is roughly Bergmann's (2005) definition of a defeater, the chief difference being that I, like Pollock and Cruz (1999, 195), define defeaters in terms of propositional rather than doxastic justification. Since doxastic justification for p requires propositional justification for p , anything that defeats one's propositional justification will also defeat one's doxastic justification.

¹⁸¹For endorsements and discussion of higher-order defeaters see Bergmann (2005, 423), Goldman (1986, 62), Kvanvig (2012, 34), Almeida (2007, 65), and Smithies (2011).

poor evidence for p while recognizing that one has extremely good evidence for not- p . Usually, in such a case one epistemically ought to believe not- p , and that alone is sufficient to defeat their propositional justification for p whether or not they believe not- p .¹⁸² I have no general answer to the question of when one epistemically ought to believe p . When I appeal to the notion in what follows I do so on an intuitive, case-by-case basis.

By their very nature, defeaters can cause transmission failure for they can prevent one from acquiring propositional justification for the conclusion of an argument. Thus, the following principle expresses a non-trivial condition for when transmission fails:

DEFEATERS

For any inference i , i fails to transmit propositional justification
IF (AND BECAUSE) i 's conclusion is subject to either rebutting,
undercutting, or higher-order defeaters.¹⁸³

Although DEFEATERS can explain transmission failure in great variety of cases, there are certain epistemically self-defeating arguments whose inability to transmit justification DEFEATERS cannot explain. For example, take an abductive argument against abduction:

ABDUCTION

¹⁸²This is Jennifer Lackey's (2000) and (2003, 707) idea of a normative defeater. If one does not think there are such defeaters, i.e., if one thinks only *beliefs* can be defeaters, that will only help my case in what follows.

¹⁸³The form of such 'if-and-because' conditionals is the following: $((Q \rightarrow R) \wedge R) \rightarrow (Q \text{ because } R)$. The truth of any such conditional fails to entail that either Q or R obtain.

(Abd1) Abductive arguments $A_1...A_n$ have been shown to have false conclusions.¹⁸⁴

(Abd2) The best explanation of (Abd1) is that abductive arguments are unreliable.

Therefore,

(Abd3) Abductive arguments are unreliable.

Suppose you had propositional justification for the premises of this argument. Even so, intuitively, your inference involving this argument fails to transmit propositional justification, but explaining just why is difficult. For not only are the premises *consistent* with the conclusion but you *can* simultaneously have propositional (and doxastic) justification for the premises and the conclusion. For example, you could have non-abductive grounds for (Abd1), (Abd2), *and* (Abd3); and if you did, you would not, or at least need not, have any kind of defeater for (Abd3). So, DEFEATERS cannot account for the failure of transmission in this case.

One might think that DEFEATERS is the wrong place to look for an account of why your inference involving ABDUCTION must fail to transmit propositional justification, suggesting the following:

INFERENCEAL IGNORANCE

For any inference i , i fails to transmit propositional justification

IF (AND BECAUSE) one lacks propositional justification to believe

¹⁸⁴Let us assume that $A_1...A_n$ are a representative sample of abductive arguments.

that *i*'s premises and conclusion are logically related in such a way that if the premises are true, that is a good reason for supposing that the conclusion is at least likely to be true.¹⁸⁵

Although externalists will tend to disagree with INFERENTIAL IGNORANCE, even they should think there is something wrong with the idea that you may acquire propositional justification for (Abd3) via ABDUCTION. We could turn this into an argument against externalism if DEFEATERS and INFERENTIAL IGNORANCE specified the only causes of transmission failure that could possibly account for the inability of inferences involving ABDUCTION to transmit. For then externalists would be saddled with having to allow clearly objectionable arguments to transmit justification. But, as we will see, these are not the only two possible conditions for transmission failure.¹⁸⁶

Here's the second puzzling case:

THE CASE OF THE MAGIC BALL

Suppose you were part of a very large community of highly educated researchers, CHER, who were in possession of a magic ball.

This ball is like a magic 8 ball except that it seems to deliver all and only true propositions when it is shaken (via a little dis-

¹⁸⁵Strong forms of internalism will require more than merely having propositional justification to believe that the premises and conclusion are so related, insisting that one must also have doxastic justification, e.g., Fumerton (1995), Leite (2008), and Cling (2003). Strong forms of externalism will require much less, making the having of propositional justification to believe the premises support the conclusion irrelevant so long as the premises do in fact support the conclusion, e.g., Alston (1986).

¹⁸⁶Note that transmission failure can be overdetermined when one's inference satisfies multiple conditions sufficient for transmission failure.

play panel on one side of it). CHER's sole research project is to discover whether the magic ball ever errs. To this end CHER has continued to shake and record every deliverance of the magic ball over the past several decades and has sought independent confirmation of each deliverance. On many, many, many, many occasions CHER has been able to confirm the truth of the ball's deliverances and has never been able to disconfirm any deliverance. Moreover, so far as CHER has been able to tell, the ball's accuracy is restricted to no particular subject matters: in those instances where CHER has been able to confirm its deliverances, the ball has delivered all and only substantive truths on such matters as aeronautical engineering, ancient history, the psychological states of specific individuals, discrete mathematics, chess strategy, advanced physics, materials science, economics, philosophy, etc. Thus, you have good reason to think that if the magic ball "says" p then p . But suppose one day you shook the magic ball and it told you the following: you lack propositional justification for the claim that if the magic ball "says" p then p .

Consider, then, the following argument:

MAGIC

(M1) If the magic ball "says" p , then p .

(M2) The magic ball "says" I lack propositional justification for

(M1).

Therefore,

(M3) I lack justification for (M1).

Intuitively, your inference involving this argument is unfit to give you propositional justification for (M3). But again, explaining why is no facile task. MAGIC is a deductive argument whose premises and conclusion form a consistent set. Moreover, you have propositional (and doxastic) justification for the premises simultaneously: the fact that CHER has never disconfirmed any deliverance but has rather independently confirmed so many of the magic ball's deliverances on such different subjects surely justifies you in believing (M1),¹⁸⁷ and provided you read the ball's display in normal conditions you would have propositional justification for (M2).

Neither INFERENCEAL IGNORANCE nor DEFEATERS can explain why your inference involving this argument must fail to transmit propositional justification. INFERENCEAL IGNORANCE cannot help because MAGIC is a deductive argument whose validity you have no reason to doubt. Might DEFEATERS help? Not a bit. For DEFEATERS to help it must be the case that anyone who has propositional justification for (M1) and (M2) also has a defeater for (M3). But what could that defeater be? To be sure, *believing* (M3) is an undercutting defeater for itself. This is because believing (M3)

¹⁸⁷Let the exact number of confirmations be so large that one's justification for (M1) is not easily called into question, e.g., five hundred million independent confirmations. If inductive generalizations are ever justified, this surely is one such case.

is a higher-order defeater for (M1) which is what (M3)'s justification would partly depend on. But suppose you did not believe (M3), but instead suspended belief in (M3). Then, you would no longer have a defeater for (M3). Let me explain.

There are roughly two ways of having a defeater for any given proposition p . One can (i) *believe* something problematic about p which defeats one's propositional justification for p , or one can (ii) have some combination of beliefs and/or experiences which make it the case that one *epistemically ought to* believe something problematic about p which defeats one's justification for p . Now it is easy to see why you lack a defeater for (M3) in the case above when you suspend belief in (M3). If you don't in fact believe (M3), then the only way for one to have a defeater for (M1) (and thus (M3) itself) is for it to be the case that you epistemically ought to believe (M3). But the problem with claiming that you epistemically ought to believe (M3) is that this can only be if justification transmits! That is, for it to be the case that you epistemically ought to believe (M3) on the basis of having competently inferred it from the propositionally justified premises (M1) and (M2) it must be the case that you have propositional justification for (M3). For without it it is not epistemically permissible to believe (M3). And since you epistemically ought to believe (M3) only if it is epistemically permissible to believe (M3), it follows that you epistemically ought to believe (M3) only if justification transmits. But this is just what we wanted to avoid.

Thus, since you needn't have any defeater for (M3), DEFEATERS cannot

explain why your inference involving MAGIC fails to transmit propositional justification to its conclusion.

Let us consider one final case. Take the following claim inspired by the knower paradox:

(J) I do not have propositional justification for sentence (J).

Now consider this argument:

JUSTIFIER

(J1) It's impossible for one to have propositional justification for (p and that one does not have propositional justification for p).
(premise)

(J2) (J) is false. (supposition for reductio)

(J3) I have propositional justification for (J). (from (J2))

(J4) I have propositional justification for ((J) and that I do not have propositional justification for (J)). (from (J3))

(J5) I do not have propositional justification for ((J) and that I do not have propositional justification for (J)). (from (J1))

(J6) I have and I do not have propositional justification for ((J) and that I do not have propositional justification for (J)). (from (J4) and (J5))

Therefore,

(J7) (J) is true. (from (J2)-(J6) by RAA)

I assume you one can have propositional justification for (J1).¹⁸⁸ Every other line in the above argument follows from (J1), our reductio assumption (J2), the meaning of (J), and some plausible inference rules.^{189,190} (This is the first promised intermediate insight, and as far as I have been able to tell, this is a new sort of epistemic paradox.)

But is JUSTIFIER the sort of argument that you can use to acquire propositional justification for (J7)? Intuitively, it is not. There's also an argument that supports this intuition. Even though (J7) *itself* doesn't, or at least needn't, contradict anything you take yourself to have justification for, what does generate contradiction is the higher-order proposition *that you have propositional justification for (J7)*. For if you have propositional justification for (J7) then (J4) is correct, and this contradicts (J1). But surely it can be more reasonable to deny that your inference involving JUSTIFIER fails to transmit propositional justification than to deny (J1).¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁸An assumption is enough for our purposes because the problem does not turn on whether one actually has justification for (J1), but the *possibility* that one can have justification for (J1). Put differently, the whole point of this argument is to show that there is a possible circumstance wherein transmission fails, but not for any of the usual reasons.

¹⁸⁹(J3) follows from (J2), one's understanding of the meaning of (J), and an application of double negation elimination (assuming, as I do, that (J) is semantically equivalent to "It is false that I have propositional justification for (J)"); (J4) follows from (J3) and the meaning of (J); (J5) follows from (J1) and a plausible inference from necessity to actuality; and (J6) is a contradiction derived from (J4) and (J5). Thus, by reductio reasoning and (J1) we deductively arrive at (J7).

¹⁹⁰In personal conversation, Roy Sorensen and Patrick Greenough have also indicated the same.

¹⁹¹The JUSTIFIER argument differs from the knower paradox as well as the lottery and preface paradoxes. It differs from the lottery and preface paradoxes because the conclusions of those arguments *themselves* contradict other things we know (or at least justifiedly believe) to be correct (e.g., that no one will win the fair lottery or that this book contains some error). But (J7) *itself* doesn't contradict anything we take ourselves to have

But if JUSTIFIER cannot transmit justification, what might explain this? DEFEATERS cannot easily explain why your inference involving JUSTIFIER must fail to transmit justification. To see the difficulty consider the two ways in which DEFEATERS might explain what's gone wrong in cases involving JUSTIFIER. *First*, if you either *believe or else epistemically ought to believe* (J1), then you will have a higher-order defeater for (J7).¹⁹² This is because (J7) expresses the same proposition as (J),¹⁹³ which, given its self-referential nature is equivalent to an instance of (*p* and I do not have propositional justification for.

Now compare the knower paradox in which one can derive:

(K) This sentence is not known to be true.

from the meaning of (K), the factivity of knowledge, and a few other plausible assumptions. (See Maitzen (1998).) A key difference between the JUSTIFIER argument and the knower paradox is that the knower argument does not cause problems for the transmission of justification for one *can* have both propositional and doxastic justification for (K) on the basis of one's deductive inference even though one cannot know (K). Or at least that is arguable since (K) itself doesn't preclude having doxastic or propositional justification for (K), indeed, this much seems to be taken for granted in the formulation of the problem (e.g., see Lee (2000, 226)). Moreover, one can have justification for (K) even if one *believes* that they don't know it. Perhaps there is an epistemic norm to the effect that if one believes that one does not know *p* then one lacks justification for *p*, but any such norm would require much argument because certain features of knowledge seem to make it reasonable for us to, at least sometimes, *suspend* judgment as to whether we have knowledge. Consider the fallibilist doctrine that one can have reasons that provide one with knowledge-level justification for *p* even though *p* might be false; or consider the way in which Gettierization precludes knowledge but not justified belief. If one ever has just a very small reason to suspect that either obtains with respect to *p*, it would be reasonable for one to suspend judgment as to whether they know *p* though such weak reasons cannot defeat one's justification for *p*. So (J) appears to raise issues for inferential justification and transmission and closure principles for justification that the knower paradox does not raise. (For defense of the idea that one *can* have justification for *p* while withholding belief about whether one knows *p* vis-a-vis Williamson (2000), see McGlynn (2011).)

¹⁹²I assume that if believing that one lacks propositional justification for *p* is a defeater for *p*, then so is believing that one cannot have propositional justification for *p*.

¹⁹³I'm taking deflationism about truth for granted here.

justification for p). *Second*, if you either *believe or else epistemically ought to believe* (J7), then you will also have a higher-order defeater for (J7). This too is due to (J)'s self-referential nature, for to believe (J) is to believe that one lacks propositional justification for (J).

The difficulty in trying to explain why JUSTIFIER cannot be used to transmit justification by appealing to DEFEATERS, then, is that it seems perfectly possible, indeed plausible, that you can have propositional justification for (J1), competently deduce (J7) from it, and yet it *not* be the case that you have either of the above mentioned defeaters for (J7). Clearly you might not believe either (J1) or (J7). So if you have a defeater for (J7) it will stem from its being the case that you epistemically ought to believe (J1) or (J7). (J7) is a transparently self-defeating proposition, so it appears unlikely that it would be even epistemically permissible for you to believe it. As for (J1), it seems easy to imagine circumstances in which you retain your propositional justification for (J1) though it fails to be the case that you epistemically ought to believe it. For example,

THE HUMBLE EPISTEMOLOGIST

You see that (J1) is supported by intuitive examples and you have some carefully worked out arguments in defense of (J1). However, you are unaware of any past discussion of (J1) in the literature despite your reasonable efforts to discover such discussion. Also, you have not yet had the opportunity to share your reasons in favor of (J1) with the epistemological community. Being very

familiar with the extent and degree of disagreement in epistemology you know that some epistemologists are likely to lack and perhaps have even contrary intuitions about the cases that seem to support (J1) in addition to finding problems with your carefully worked out arguments for (J1). You therefore suspend belief in (J1) until you are able to share and discuss your reasons for (J1) with other epistemologists.

It seems to me that in this sort of case your suspension of belief is completely reasonable and that you are under no epistemic requirement to believe (J1) despite your propositional justification for it.¹⁹⁴ If this is correct, then it fails to be the case that you epistemically ought to believe (J1), and thus you fail to have a defeater for (J7).

So we have a problem. Intuitively, your inferences involving arguments like ABDUCTION, MAGIC, and JUSTIFIER must fail to transmit propositional justification. The most natural place to look for an explanation of this fact is to DEFEATERS, but that principle cannot do the needed explanatory work. So it is unclear why your inferences involving these arguments must fail to transmit propositional justification.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴Although *actual* disagreement among epistemic peers might count as a kind of undercutting defeater, *merely possible* disagreement does not. Thus, I maintain that one may have (*ultima facie*) propositional justification for (J1) in the above case.

¹⁹⁵For the most part I will speak as though it is more or less impossible for *anyone in any circumstances* to acquire justification via ABDUCTION, MAGIC, and JUSTIFIER. This is for convenience. I acknowledge that there may be cases where one's cognitive/epistemic situation may be so impoverished that they can use these arguments to acquire justification, and eventually I make accommodations for this (see section 4). But since those reading this paper are unlikely to be in so destitute a situation, I take liberty to speak

7.3 A New Condition For Transmission Failure

In my view the problems involving ABDUCTION, MAGIC, and JUSTIFIER are owed to the fact that they satisfy the following condition for transmission failure:

IMPOSSIBILITY OF JUSTIFIED BASING (IJB)

For any inference i , i fails to transmit propositional justification
IF (AND BECAUSE) it is impossible for one to justifiedly believe (= have doxastic justification for) i 's conclusion solely on the basis of one's inference from i 's justifiedly believed premises.

The idea is this: if propositional justification is to transmit to the conclusion of some argument, thereby giving one propositional justification for it, there must be some possible world where one justifiedly believes both the premises and conclusion *and* justifiedly believes the conclusion solely on the basis of one's inference from the justifiedly believed premises. If there is no such world, then transmission fails. For now let the sort of modality at issue be logical possibility, section 4 suggests some restrictions. The qualification that it be possible for one to base their belief *solely* on the basis of one's inference from the justifiedly believed premises is owed to the fact that one might base their belief both on the their inference and on something else g , where g happens to give one justification to believe the conclusion. In such a

somewhat loosely. (This is also why the cases involving these arguments were constructed using the second person reference "you".)

case one would have a justified belief, but it would be a mistake to say that justification transmitted from the premises to the conclusion.

There are several considerations that weigh in favor of (IJB). First, it is intuitively plausible. There is something wrong with the idea that one could have propositional justification to believe p and yet it be impossible for one to justifiedly believe it on the basis of the inference in virtue of which one has justification to believe it. To be sure, in the actual world and in nearby worlds one may be unable to believe that which one has justification to believe due to, say, brainwashing, strange pills, or other cognitive afflictions.¹⁹⁶ But such limitations are contingent and are overcome elsewhere in modal space.

Second, (IJB) solves the problems raised by ABDUCTION, MAGIC, and JUSTIFIER. Concerning MAGIC, we saw that you could not justifiedly believe the premises and conclusion of that argument because *believing* the conclusion constituted a higher-order defeater for one of the premises. Thus, there is no possible world in which you justifiedly believe its premises and conclusion. So according to (IJB) the transmission of propositional justification fails. In the case of ABDUCTION we saw that if you were to believe the conclusion of that argument solely on the basis of your inference from the premises you would have an undercutting defeater for the conclusion. Thus, there is no possible world in which one justifiedly believes the conclusion *solely* on the basis of one's inference from the justifiedly believed premises. Thus, according to (IJB), transmission fails. Finally, concerning JUSTIFIER,

¹⁹⁶Feldman and Conee (1985, 17); Alston (1989, 92-96).

one cannot justifiedly believe it's conclusion, (J7), for two reasons: because believing premise (J1) constitutes a higher-order defeater for (J7) *and* because believing (J7) constitutes a higher-order defeater for itself. So here too transmission fails according to (IJB).

Given the role defeaters play in explaining why you cannot justifiedly believe the conclusions in the above cases, one might prefer the following condition to (IJB):

IMPOSSIBILITY OF BELIEVING WITHOUT DEFEATERS (IBWD)

For any inference i , i fails to transmit propositional justification IF (AND BECAUSE) it is impossible for one to believe i 's conclusion solely on the basis of one's inference from i 's justifiedly believed premises without having a defeater for the conclusion.

Notice what (IJB) and (IBWD) have in common. They tell us that transmission can fail in one's actual circumstances because of how things are at other possible circumstances. This is unlike DEFEATERS and all other proposed cases of transmission failure (see section 5) which locate sources of transmission failure in features of one's actual circumstances. Both principles also tell us that, in the case of inferential justification anyway, having propositional justification depends partly on the possibility of having doxastic justification.

I have no deep objections to (IBWD). Indeed, (IJB) entails (IBWD) because defeaters prevent one from having justified beliefs. Why, then, do I even bother with (IJB)? Well, there is a further reason to endorse it, a reason

which is independent of the present worry about arguments like ABDUCTION, MAGIC, and JUSTIFIER. (Here is the second promised intermediate insight.)

Presumably, if a person has justification to believe p , then there is something in virtue of which one has justification to believe p . Now take the following thesis:

(P) If it is possible for one to have propositional justification for some proposition p , then it is also possible for one to justifiedly believe (= have doxastic justification for) p by basing one's belief in p on one's justifying grounds for p .

where one's *justifying grounds for p* are whatever it is that gives one propositional justification for p . This is quite plausible if the space of worlds at issue is not highly restricted. Now, recall, to say that transmission fails in a given case is just to say that one lacks inferential justification to believe the conclusion of the argument in virtue of one's inference from its propositionally justified premises. Thus (IJB) is equivalent to the following:

(IJB*) If one has inferential propositional justification for p , then it is possible for one to justifiedly believe the conclusion solely on the basis of one's inference from the propositionally justified premises.

And since (P) entails (IJB*), we have a further reason to endorse (IJB).¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁷It is easy to see that (P) entails (IJB*). Let ' $J^P p/g$ ' be the claim that one has propositional justification for p , where g is one's justifying ground for p ; and let ' $J^D p/g$ '

Is there reason to endorse (P)? Absolutely. Denying (P) is quite difficult for it would require one to maintain that there are some justifying grounds that are impossible for one to epistemically base their belief on. But what could explain this fact? After all, the basing relation is a contingent relation and thus if one has propositional justification to believe p in virtue of some justifying ground g and also believes p , what could *necessarily* prevent one from epistemically basing their belief in p on g ? The most prominent theories of the basing relation have it that what it takes for a belief to be based on some ground g is (very roughly) either (i) one's belief in p being non-deviantly caused by g ,¹⁹⁸ or (ii) it being the case that one's belief in p

be the claim that one justifiedly believes p and bases that belief on g . We can now represent (P) thus: $\forall p \forall g (\Diamond J^P p/g \rightarrow \Diamond J^D p/g)$, letting ' p ' range over propositions and ' g ' range over justifying grounds. Now (IJB*), unlike (P), is concerned with a specific kind of propositional justification, namely, inferential justification, which is distinguished from other kinds of propositional justification by the type of justifying ground that generates one's propositional justification (i.e., an inference from propositionally justified premises). Thus, to avoid complications in this little proof we will prove the more general formula: (G) $\forall p \forall g (J^P p/g \rightarrow \Diamond J^D p/g)$, which basically says that if one has propositional justification for p in virtue of a justifying ground g , then it is possible for one to justifiedly believe p on that basis. So (G) entails (IJB*) because (IJB*) is concerned with just one kind of ground a person could have, namely, inferential grounds. So if (P) entails (G), then (P) also entails (IJB*). The following (abridged) reductio indicates that (P) entails (G):

1. $\forall p \forall g (\Diamond J^P p/g \rightarrow \Diamond J^D p/g)$ ((P) premise)
2. $\neg \forall p \forall g (J^P p/g \rightarrow \Diamond J^D p/g)$ (\neg (G), assumption for reductio)
3. $J^P p/g \wedge \neg \Diamond J^D p/g$ (from 2)
4. $\Diamond J^P p/g$ (from 2 and the assumption that actuality implies possibility)
5. $\Diamond J^D p/g$ (from 1, 4)
6. $\neg \Diamond J^D p/g \wedge \Diamond J^D p/g$ (from 3 and 5)
7. $\forall p \forall g (J^P p/g \rightarrow \Diamond J^D p/g)$ (RAA from 2-6)

¹⁹⁸Alston (1989, 227-230) and Turri (2011).

would have been so caused by g in appropriate circumstances,¹⁹⁹ or (iii) one having a meta-belief to the effect that g is a good reason to believe p ,²⁰⁰ or (iv) some combination of (i)-(iii).²⁰¹ But it is a contingent matter whether (i)-(iv) obtain. So it seems unlikely that one could both believe p and have propositional justification to believe p in virtue of g , and yet it remain *impossible* for one's belief in p to be based on g . Accordingly, we would do well not to reject (P).²⁰²

One might worry that certain self-referential statements may generate counterexamples to (P). For instance:

(Q) I don't believe (Q).

Now, I either believe (Q) or I don't. If I believe (Q), I will, typically and upon reflection, be aware that (Q) is false. But if I do not believe (Q), I will, typically and upon reflection, be aware that (Q) is true. One might claim of such a situation that because (Q)'s truth value is usually transparent to me upon consideration I have propositional justification to believe (Q), yet I cannot form a justified belief in (Q) because doing so obviously falsifies it. My preferred response is to deny that one ever has *ultima facie* propositional justification for (Q) even though one's evidence for its truth value is typically

¹⁹⁹Swain (1979) and (1985) develops this but maintains it only as a sufficient condition for basing.

²⁰⁰Tolliver (1982) and Leite (2008).

²⁰¹Audi (1986), Karcz (2000), Swain (1979) and (1985), and Moser (1989, 157).

²⁰²It may also be of note that Turri's (2010, 320) recent account of the relationship between propositional and doxastic justification also entails (P). Roughly, he argues that one has propositional justification for p at t in virtue of having some means available to one at t by which one could form a justified belief in p .

quite good.²⁰³ There are a couple reasons to think this correct stance to take on (Q). First, consider the distinctly epistemic goal of having true *beliefs* and avoiding false *beliefs*: because (Q) cannot ever be truly believed, how could *believing* it ever be valuable from the epistemic point of view? Or again, above we noted that for one to have *ultima facie* propositional justification for *p* is for *p* to be *worthy of belief*. But how could (Q) ever be worthy of belief for a thinker who realizes that believing (Q) necessarily falsifies (Q)? Intuitively, the rational doxastic stance to take towards (Q) is that of suspension. This is not to say that (Q) might not have *some* epistemic merit—indeed, it may even be *prima facie* justified. My claim is only that one’s justification for (Q) never rises to the level of *ultima facie* propositional justification.²⁰⁴

The second reason to reject the view that one could have *ultima facie* propositional justification for (Q) rests on the tendentious assumption that rational thinkers with limited cognitive resources who consider (Q) with understanding can justifiedly suspend belief in (Q) despite recognizing its truth.²⁰⁵ Now, suppose such a thinker who justifiedly suspends belief in (Q)

²⁰³Although I always mean *ultima facie* propositional justification when I speak of having propositional justification, it is helpful to be explicit about it in what follows.

²⁰⁴There are other positive rational stances one can take towards (Q). For example, I think one can rationally *act* on the basis of this mere *prima facie* justification to believe (Q), e.g., one can rationally place a bet on the question of whether or not they believe (Q). Or perhaps if we make a distinction between belief and other, belief-like attitudes like *trust* or *commitment*, we might be able to defend the view where one has some kind of *ultima facie* non-epistemic warrant to trust or to be committed to (Q) though they cannot have *ultima facie* propositional justification to believe (Q).

²⁰⁵This is tendentious yet reasonable. For if one could not justifiedly suspend belief in (Q) while recognizing it’s truth, then one epistemically ought to continually oscillate

can also have *ultima facie* propositional justification for (Q). If one were to recognize that this was their situation, then one ought to believe the following conjunction:

(R) I have *ultima facie* propositional justification to believe (Q),
but I do not believe it.

But believing (R) involves one in an epistemic version of Moore's paradox, for it is a case where one's higher-order belief conflicts with one's first-order doxastic state, which ought not be. Put differently: it seems epistemically irrational to take any other doxastic stance towards *p* than belief when one *recognizes* that one has *ultima facie* propositional justification for *p*.²⁰⁶ So if we are to avoid an epistemic Moorean absurdity while also maintaining that one can justifiedly suspend belief in (Q), then we must deny that one can have *ultima facie* propositional justification for (Q). So (P) seems to get matters right: we should not allow propositional and doxastic justification to come apart to the point where one can have propositional justification for *p* but it be impossible for one to justifiedly believe *p*.²⁰⁷

between belief and disbelief in (Q). But surely there is no such epistemic *requirement* on us.

²⁰⁶Smithies (2011) explores the sort of Moorean irrationality involved in propositions like (R).

²⁰⁷Other examples related to (Q) have been suggested to me, to which I would give the same response. For instance, on some views of self-knowledge one may be meditating and forming no beliefs but given one's special awareness of their own mental life have justification to believe *I am not now forming any beliefs*, even though one cannot justifiedly believe it. Or again, suppose you had outstanding evidence for the claim *I believe P iff not-P*. Here, one's awareness of their doxastic state concerning P quickly leads to paradox. (See Conee (1982) and (1987), Kroon (1993), Sorensen (1987), and Christensen (2010) for discussion of this kind of case.) Or yet again, suppose you had spectacular evidence for

Now I want to flag the third promised intermediate insight. (P) not only provides us with further reason to endorse (IJB) and thereby resolve the puzzles involving inferential justification, (P) also gives us a principled way of resolving similar puzzles concerning non-inferential justification. For example, memory and testimony despite being sources of propositional justification can have outputs whose very content prevent them from being sources of propositional justification for just those outputs. Take a case of testimony where a usually reliable testifier tells you that (T) her testimony is generally unreliable.²⁰⁸ Or take a case where one seemingly remembers that (M) one's memory is generally unreliable. Testimony and memory are both sources of propositional justification, but these cases are just as puzzling as the cases involving ABDUCTION, MAGIC, and JUSTIFIER. Again, as in the case of MAGIC, we cannot appeal to defeaters for one needn't actually believe (T) or (M). But why then might one fail to have propositional justification for (T) and (M) when these usual sources of proposition purport to provide one with such justification? (P) offers us an explanation for (P) tells us that it must be possible for one to justifiedly believe (T) and (M) on the basis of another's testimony or on the basis of one's memory if one is to have propo-

some proposition P but also had undefeated evidence that your reasoning with respect to P is unreliable, and would continue to be unreliable no matter what further evidence you obtain. (See Egan and Elga (2005), Bommarito (2010), and Christensen (2010) for discussion of this kind of case.) Although the details of these cases differ, I think the correct response to them is to maintain that one lacks *ultima facie* propositional justification for the propositions at issue, even though one may have as much as *prima facie* propositional justification for them.

²⁰⁸I'm assuming anti-reductionist view of testimony here.

sitional justification to believe them. This cannot happen because *believing* (T) and (M) will generate an undercutting defeater for (T) and (M), thus, according (P) one lacks proposition justification (T) and (M), which is the intuitively correct conclusion.²⁰⁹

7.4 The Restriction Problem for (IJB)

We should now consider what type of modality is involved in (IJB) (and (P) and (IBWD)). For a problem arises if we leave (IJB) at logical possibility, and thus leave the range of possible worlds at issue completely unrestricted. For surely there is a logically possible world where one might have propositional justification for (Abd1) and (Abd2) and abductively infer (Abd3) from it, but fail to see that one has just made an abductive inference for some reason for which one is wholly irresponsible (this might be a modified kind of demon world or perhaps a world where one is inferentially blind, i.e., unable to recognize the types of inferences one uses though one always uses them well). Arguably, in such worlds one may have propositional justification for (Abd3) in virtue of inferring it from (Abd1) and (Abd2). But surely we do not want to have to say that propositional justification transmits for one in the *actual* world where one is not benighted in any of these ways simply

²⁰⁹(P) indicates that propositional justification is crucially dependent on the possibility of doxastic justification. This is a fact that I have given reason to think true, though it is not one I have attempted to explain. In other work I explain this by locating our sources of propositional justification in certain *ways of forming beliefs* that are both accessible (in a specific sense) and intrinsically rational from the epistemic point of view. Thus, making propositional justification deeply dependent on the possibility of doxastic justification.

because one has a benighted counterpart elsewhere in modal space for whom propositional justification transmits.

In addition to problems caused by being too permissive in the range of possible worlds at issue, problems can arise if we are too parsimonious. Suppose we were to restrict the possible worlds to those where one has the cognitive capacities one has in the actual world—call these *cognitively possible worlds*. Such a restriction would have counterintuitive consequences. For one can have propositional justification for a proposition even if one is actually prevented from taking advantage of that justification. Imagine one who has outstanding evidence for p , but has a chip in her brain that halts the belief forming process. This is a case where the unfortunate has propositional justification for p even though it is cognitively impossible for her to justifiedly believe it. So the modality at issue in (IJB) cannot be too restrictive.

Call the problem of finding an appropriate restriction on the range of possible worlds at issue in (IJB) *the Restriction Problem*.

To avoid these problems I propose that we restrict the modality at issue in (IJB) to the intersection of normal worlds, cognitively improved worlds, and justificatory worlds. Following Goldman, we can let the set of *normal worlds* be those worlds which are sufficiently like the way we take the actual world to be, thereby excluding demon-like worlds and, more generally, worlds where our environment and cognitive processes differ significantly from how we take the actual world to be.²¹⁰ We will take the *cognitively improved worlds* to be

²¹⁰Goldman (1986, 107).

those worlds where one's cognitive abilities are at least as good as, but not too much better than, the way they are in the actual world. This will exclude worlds where one reasons, say, abductively but lacks the ability to recognize the fact that one is reasoning in such a way. Finally, we let the *justificatory worlds* be those worlds where one has propositional justification for those things one actually has propositional justification for. That is, everything one has propositional justification to believe in the actual world is something one's justificatory possible counterparts also have propositional justification for. Limiting the modality in (IJB) to justificatory worlds prevents counterexamples involving counterparts whose epistemic situation is significantly different from one's own. For convenience, let us call the intersection of normal, cognitively improved, and justificatory worlds *epistemically possible worlds* and the corresponding kind of modality be called *epistemic modality*. As far as I'm able to tell epistemic modality, or something roughly like it, is the sort of modality that resolves the Restriction Problem, and is thus crucially related to the having of propositional justification.

Now for the final intermediate insight. Having provided an answer to the restriction problem we can now say with a bit more precision what it is for an argument to be epistemically self-defeating. We can say that an argument Γ is *epistemically self-defeating* for an agent S just in case there is no epistemically possible world in which S justifiedly believes Γ 's conclusion solely on the basis of her inference involving Γ .²¹¹ This provides an illuminating

²¹¹The characterization omits consideration of premises, for there are premiseless argu-

criteria for what is common to a whole host of arguments that are naturally called “epistemically self-defeating.” For example, this characterization captures what is common to the following, epistemically problematic argument types: (i) arguments whose premises, if believed, would defeat their conclusion (e.g., JUSTIFIER), (ii) arguments whose conclusion calls into question the trustworthiness of their very inference type (e.g., ABDUCTION), (iii) arguments whose conclusion, if believed, would defeat some premise of that very argument (e.g., MAGIC), and (iv) arguments whose conclusion is, what we might call, a *subjectively unjustifiable proposition*: a proposition which is such that one cannot acquire propositional justification for it. Here are some candidates for such propositions: this statement is false; p but I lack propositional justification for p ; not- p but I have propositional justification for p ; p but I don’t believe p ; not- p but I believe it; p but my evidence for p is probably misleading; global skepticism about propositional justification is true; etc. These propositions seem to be such that their content prohibits one from acquiring propositional justification for them even if one might be able to marshal an argument in their favor.²¹²

ments (conditional proofs and reductios) that one may wish to regard as epistemically self-defeating. E.g., by conditional proof from the Liar sentence one can derive a contradiction, which, *ex hypothesi*, cannot be justifiedly believed.

²¹²This is consistent with claiming that these propositions can have a weaker positive epistemic status than propositional justification.

7.5 Transmission Principles

Transmission principles are principles which provide a sufficient condition for when one has propositional justification for the conclusion of an argument in virtue of competently inferring it from that argument's propositionally justified premises. (TP) is one such principle:

(TP) Necessarily, IF S competently infers C from $P_1...P_n$ and S has propositional justification for $P_1...P_n$, THEN S has propositional justification for C in virtue of competently inferring it from the propositionally justified premises $P_1...P_n$.²¹³

The problem with (TP) is that it fails to take into account those conditions that can prevent propositional justification from transmitting, e.g., premise circularity. What is needed, then, is an informative permutation of (TP) that takes such conditions into account.

Here's a list of potential, non-trivial sufficient conditions for transmission failure:

PREMISE CIRCULARITY

For any inference i , i fails to transmit propositional justification

²¹³One worry about transmission is that the requirement of having justified premises would seem to prohibit one from gaining justification via conditional or reductio reasoning (when such reasoning fails to involve premises). This is mistaken because such reasoning is a source of *non-inferential* justification, and the debate over transmission is a debate that concerns inferential justification only. Accordingly, this worry conflates the *means* by which one acquires justification (inference) with different *types* of justification (inferential/non-inferential).

IF (AND BECAUSE) *i* involves a premise circular argument.²¹⁴

DEFEATERS

For any inference *i*, *i* fails to transmit propositional justification

IF (AND BECAUSE) *i*'s conclusion is subject to either rebutting, undercutting, or higher-order defeaters.

INFERENTIAL IGNORANCE

For any inference *i*, *i* fails to transmit propositional justification

IF (AND BECAUSE) one lacks propositional justification to believe that *i*'s premises and conclusion are logically related in such a way that if the premises are true, that is a good reason for supposing that the conclusion is at least likely to be true.²¹⁵

TYPE I EPISTEMIC CIRCULARITY

For any inference *i*, *i* fails to transmit propositional justification

IF (AND BECAUSE) in order to have propositional justification for *i*'s premises one must already have propositional justification for *i*'s conclusion which is independent of one's propositional justification for its premises.²¹⁶

²¹⁴Although premise circular inferences may *preserve* justification, no one thinks premise circular inferences *transmit* justification. The deductively valid premise circular inference *P therefore P*, does not cause us to fail to have justification to believe either its premise or its conclusion; rather it causes us to fail to have propositional justification for its conclusion *in virtue of* competently inferring it from the propositionally justified premise.

²¹⁵See footnote 8.

²¹⁶This condition is central to the debate over whether or not Moore's proof provides or merely assumes justification for its conclusion. Interestingly, those enmeshed in this debate tend to agree that arguments which suffer from the indicated form of epistemic circularity do fail to transmit; what they disagree about is whether or not Moore's proof

TYPE II EPISTEMIC CIRCULARITY

For any inference i , i fails to transmit propositional justification IF (AND BECAUSE) one's propositional justification for i 's premises depend on a method M , and i 's eventual conclusion is that ' M is reliable' (or that ' M is a source of justification').²¹⁷

IMPOSSIBILITY OF JUSTIFIED BASING (IJB)

For any inference i , i fails to transmit propositional justification IF (AND BECAUSE) it is epistemically impossible for one to justifiedly believe i 's conclusion solely on the basis of one's inference from i 's justifiedly believed premises.

Let us refer to this list of potential sufficient conditions for transmission failure as 'THE LIST'. Each member of THE LIST identifies non-trivial conditions sufficient for transmission failure, and thus THE LIST allows us to make headway on formulating a substantive transmission principle for propositional justification. INFERENCEAL IGNORANCE, TYPE I, and TYPE II EPISTEMIC CIRCULARITY are much more controversial than the first two

runs afoul of this condition. Compare Pryor (2004, 359-60) and (forthcoming) with Wright (2000), (2003), and (2004). See Silins (2005) and Tucker (2010a) for a critical discussion of this type of condition.

²¹⁷TYPE II EPISTEMIC CIRCULARITY is a prohibition against a specific type of reasoning ("bootstrapping") legitimized by certain theories of epistemic justification. One can affirm that TYPE I EPISTEMIC CIRCULARITY prevents transmission while denying that TYPE II EPISTEMIC CIRCULARITY does only if the following principle is also denied:

(JR) We have propositional justification for a deliverance of a belief source M only if we first have propositional justification for believing that M is reliable.

For discussions of bootstrapping see Alston (1989), Cohen (2002) and (2005), Fumerton (1995, 177), Kornblith (2009), van Cleve (2003), Vogel (2000) and (2008), and Weisberg (2010).

members of THE LIST, and whether or not we ought to endorse them is a topic for another time since my purpose is to flag what I take to be an additional condition for transmission failure, namely, (IJB).

With THE LIST in hand we are able identify an informative and useful transmission principle for propositional justification:

(TP*) Necessarily, IF S competently infers C from $P_1...P_n$, S has propositional justification for $P_1...P_n$, *and no condition on THE LIST is satisfied by S 's inferring C from $P_1...P_n$* , THEN S has propositional justification for C in virtue of competently inferring it from the propositionally justified premises $P_1...P_n$.

The adequacy of (TP*) is contingent upon the adequacy of THE LIST. If there are conditions for transmission failure that THE LIST fails to capture then (TP*) will be subject to counterexamples. If I'm right about (IJB), then it needs to be part of THE LIST if (TP*) is to avoid counterexamples. For example, not only would ABDUCTION, MAGIC, and JUSTIFIER prove problematic for (TP*) if (IJB) were not on THE LIST, but so would arguments such as the following:

CONSUMER

(C1) *Consumer Reports* is reliable in its assessment of consumer products, i.e., if *Consumer Reports* "says" that some consumer product x is F , then x is probably F .

(C2) *Consumer Reports* "says" that *Consumer Reports* is not

reliable.

Therefore,

(C3) *Consumer Reports* is probably not reliable.²¹⁸

Arguments such as CONSUMER are akin to ABDUCTION, MAGIC, and JUSTIFIER in that, intuitively, they cannot be used for the purposes of acquiring propositional justification for their conclusions, though the premises and conclusion are consistent, the premises entail the truth of the conclusion, and one can have propositional justification for the premises. (IJB), unlike the other conditions on THE LIST, can explain why CONSUMER must fail to transmit justification.

7.6 Closure Principles

This discussion of transmission and transmission principles also helps us make headway on formulating an adequate closure principle for propositional justification. There are a couple important differences between closure principles and transmission principles. The most obvious difference is that closure principles say less than transmission principles for transmission principles include an ‘in virtue of’ clause which attributes one’s propositional justification for the conclusion to one’s propositional justification for the premises and one’s competent inference. In the case of propositional justification, this ‘in virtue of’ clause guarantees that anyone who (non-trivially) satisfies a correct trans-

²¹⁸The example is owed to Lewis (1971).

mission principle has gained inferential propositional justification to believe the conclusion. By contrast, satisfying a correct closure principle should leave it open whether or not one has *gained* any, much less *inferential*, justification for the conclusion. For example, a closure principle should be satisfied when one justifiedly believes p and performs a premise circular inference from p to p . Transmission principles, however, should not be satisfied in such cases.²¹⁹

For concreteness let us focus on deductive closure principles for propositional justification. Presumably, there is some correct closure principle of the form:

(CP) Necessarily, IF S has propositional justification for $P_1...P_n$,
deductively infers C from $P_1...P_n$, and ϕ THEN S has proposi-
tional justification for C .

Here ϕ stands for whatever condition must be satisfied to yield a true instance of (CP). For example, we will need a no-defeaters clause for an instance of (CP) to avoid counterexamples involving the lottery and preface paradox and other cases where one has a defeater for an argument's conclusion. Is anything else needed? Well, recall, MAGIC, JUSTIFIER, and CONSUMER are each deductive arguments whose premises can be propositionally justified, but whose conclusions cannot be even though one may lack a defeater for them. Thus, if an instance of (CP) is to avoid counterexamples involving

²¹⁹The distinction between these two kinds of principles was first made by Wright (1985, 438) and has since been endorsed and discussed by others. See Davies (2000), Dretske (2005, 15), and Pryor (forthcoming), Silins (2005), and Tucker (2010a).

MAGIC, JUSTIFIER, and CONSUMER we will need to add an (IJB)-inspired condition. Thus, for example:

(CP*) Necessarily, IF S has propositional justification for $P_1...P_n$,
deductively infers C from $P_1...P_n$, has no defeaters for C , and
it's epistemically possible for S to justifiedly believe both C and
 $P_1...P_n$, THEN S has propositional justification for C .

Notice that (CP*) does not require it to be possible for S to justifiedly believe C on the basis of her inference from $P_1...P_n$. This is because her inference may be epistemically circular or even premise circular, in which case, her justification for C is not grounded in her inference from $P_1...P_n$ but something else and it is this something else that it must be epistemically possible for S to base her belief in C on. Quite appropriately, (CP*) leaves this open.²²⁰

In conclusion, I have argued that we must acknowledge (IJB) to be an additional sufficient condition for transmission failure. Put differently, I've

²²⁰Schechter's (2011) argument against closure principles fails to cause trouble for (CP*) and (TP*). Schechter's argument is that a very long string of single premise deductions constitute a counterexample to even single premise closure principles. Roughly, the problem is that with each deduction, one's rational degree of confidence in the conclusion *should* diminish ever so slightly. Thus, at the end of a very long sequence of such deductions, one's *rational* degree of confidence should be problematically close to .5. Although this cuts against closure principles for doxastic justification first (which are the principles at issue in Schechter's paper), the results extend to propositional justification and might be thought to threaten (TP*) and (CP*). In my view Schechter's counterexample is insensitive to higher-order defeaters. For Schechter's counterexample can surface only where one either *believes* or *epistemically ought to believe* that: C is the end result of a chain of inferences where one's degree of confidence in C *epistemically ought to be* problematically close to .5. But because that implies that one lacks propositional justification to believe C , this just amounts to a higher-order defeater for C . Accordingly, the ban on defeaters takes care of Schechter's concern.

argued for a necessary condition on having inferential propositional justification for p : namely, the ability to justifiedly believe p solely on the basis of one's inference from justifiedly believed premises in some epistemically possible world. Such a condition helps illuminate those conditions needed for one to acquire inferential justification, resolves the puzzles with which we began, and is needed if we are to formulate counterexample-free transmission and deductive closure principles for *ultima facie* propositional justification.

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